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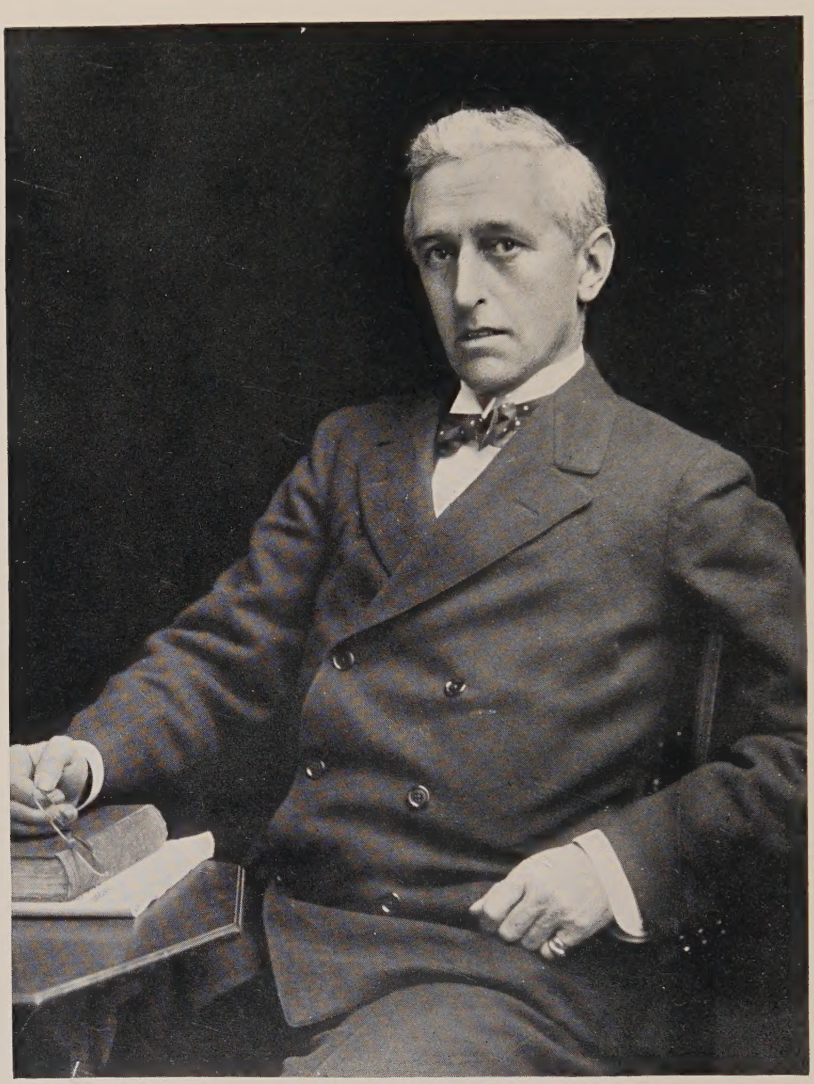

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Ever

Robert Hudson

SIR ROBERT HUDSON

A Memoir

By

J. A. SPENDER

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PREFACE

THE writing of this Memoir has provided the opportunity of paying a tribute to an old friend and at the same time throwing a little light on the indispensable silent service which the principal organizer of a great party performs in the public life of the country. Robert Hudson came prominently into the public eye through the invaluable work which he did for the Red Cross as Chairman of its Finance Committee during the war, and by the time the war ended, his name had become a household word in connexion with the ever memorable *Times* Fund. But to those who knew him and had known his work for the previous thirty years, there was nothing surprising in the administrative skill and energy, the knowledge of men and things, the all-round qualities which found so admirable a use in these strenuous years. These had been tried and tested behind the scenes in all the emergencies of political controversy during a long period of exceptional stress and strain; and were familiarly known to the succession of eminent men whom he served in a peculiarly intimate capacity.

There will always be a debate as to the part played by organization in party-politics. When disasters

happen, the organizer is the handiest scapegoat ; when victories are won, there is not much left over for him after the political stars have taken their share of the honour and glory. The best organizations will not save a party when it has made great mistakes, or when, for good cause or bad, it is running counter to the main stream of public opinion. The best leadership and the greatest cause may miss or fall short of their mark, if not backed by good organization. The thing is indispensable, but as the experience of many countries suggests, it is beset by special dangers. The machine may control the party and not the party the machine. The machine detached from the cause may fall into the hands of unscrupulous men seeking power for their own ends. If we have been saved from these dangers in our own country, it is largely due to men like Robert Hudson who, though content to be organizers, have been devoted to the causes they served and have never been tempted to put the machine above the cause. During the long period that he served the Liberal party Hudson was at no time the servant of a machine ; from first to last he was the fellow worker and intimate friend of the men who shaped the policy and controlled the fortunes of his party, and he felt his responsibility as keenly as any of them.

This explanation will seem unnecessary to those who knew him. All these felt instinctively the integrity, loyalty and sincerity which were part of his

charming personality. There is a glimpse of him, as he struck others at first sight, in a letter which the first Mrs. Thomas Hardy wrote to a friend one day in 1907, after meeting him at a London dinner-party the previous evening:

"*The* person at that dinner, to my mind, was Sir Robert Hudson. He like Aylmer possesses every virtue and every grace. I don't think I ever met anyone who impressed me so with a sense of goodness, and with it that delightful humour, that extraordinary kindness. The privilege of knowing and meeting such a man makes life worth living."

Robert Hudson was one of those men whom to meet was a pleasure which no repetition could stale.

I have had generous help in writing this book from many of Hudson's old friends and associates, but especially from Lady Hudson and his daughter, Mrs. Simon Vernon Harcourt, his brothers Mr. H. K. and Mr. E. W. Hudson; and from Mr. R. Humphrey Davies, C.B., for many years private Secretary to the Chief Liberal Whip, and afterwards Secretary of the Liberal Central Association.

J. A. S.

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CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS

The Hudson Family—Birth of Robert Arundell Hudson—Education and Early Years—Starting life in Birmingham—The Birmingham Caucus—Mr. Schnadhorst and Mr. Chamberlain—Schnadhorst's "Most Promising Lad"—The Aston Riots—The Home Rule Split—The Move to London—Appointment as Assistant Secretary.

THE Hudson family came originally from Pocklington in Yorkshire where Charles Hudson, grandfather of the Robert with whom this book is concerned, is still remembered as the man who revived the now famous Grammar School in that town. For, finding it closed, though well-endowed, he is said to have insisted on its being opened in order that his son might be educated there. Opened it had to be, though for a time the young Hudson was the only boy in the school. This solitary pupil, Robert Hudson, appears to have profited by his opportunity, for he was throughout his life a scholarly man who loved books and made himself no slight reputation as an antiquary and student of Parish history. Quite early in life he came south to Worcestershire and settled in the village of Lapworth, in Warwickshire,

where a year after his marriage with Miss Jessie Kynoch, daughter of John Kynoch of Peterhead, his son, Robert Arundell Hudson, was born on August 30, 1864.

The young Hudson remained at home and was educated partly by a governess and partly by his father until he was eleven years old, when he was sent with his brother Harry to a boarding school at Leamington where life for little boys seems to have been hard and bleak. Eighteen months later his parents moved from Lapworth to Stratford-on-Avon, and for a year he went as a day-boy to Stratford Grammar School of which he had happier memories. Then they moved back again to the family house at Lapworth, and the boys now went to Ludlow Grammar School of which Robert always spoke with warm appreciation. In after days he gave prizes to both Stratford and Ludlow, and went down to distribute prizes at each place. His education was continued between times at home; and the father, who had been one of the earliest pupils of Isaac Pitman, taught his son shorthand. Robert was never physically strong in the early days, and he was often absent from school through one ailment or another, but he was keen about games, and when at Ludlow played both cricket and football for the School, and won prizes in the sports.

Ill health put an end to his schooling by the time he was sixteen, and a few months later his parents

sent him on a voyage to the Cape in the Union liner *Anglian*, which in those days took twenty-six days to reach Cape Town. He spent most of his time in South Africa at Grahamstown, but visited Port Elizabeth and Durban, and both recovered his health and learnt something about the country which was the beginning of a life-long interest in its affairs. Three months after he got back he was judged well enough to start earning his own livelihood, and when little more than seventeen years old, he was hard at work on an office stool in Birmingham.

The next few months are guess-work, but something happened in them of which there may be a hint in the fact, which he himself put on record, that he attended a meeting at the Birmingham Town Hall to hear Bright and Chamberlain. At all events he wound up his original engagement at the end of nine months, and by the beginning of 1882 had got himself a place in the offices of the National Liberal Federation at a salary of £72 a year. Thus began a connexion which lasted continuously for forty-four years.

Those who remember Robert at this time speak of him as an exceptionally handsome lad with a natural charm, which, without seeking it, compelled the attention of his elders. He had abundant interests and high spirits, played a good game of tennis, loved cricket, read all sorts of books, and made friends wherever he went. He had already caught the itch for travel which remained with him all his life; in 1882 he went with

his father to Antwerp and Brussels, the following year to Cherbourg, St. Malo and the Channel Islands, the next to Scotland and the Western Islands, and the year after, again with his father, to Italy and Sicily. He wrote a good letter, was nimble with his tongue and could turn his hand at short notice to the squibs and pasquinades which were still in fashion among politicians in the 'eighties. All these were accomplishments which marked him out early from the rank and file of faithful subordinates. Looking at the sensitive face and delicately chiselled profile of his early portraits, one might suppose him to have been intended by nature to be recluse or scholar—scholar indeed he was in no small degree—but the born politician cannot escape his fate, and Robert evidently was sealed of this tribe from his earliest years.

That being so, he found himself at the age of eighteen on the best of all training grounds. Those whose memories go back to the seventies and early eighties of the last century and those especially who were brought up in Conservative households, will recall the sinister associations which attached to the word " caucus " and incidentally to the city which was supposed to have imported and naturalized this noxious foreign weed. The " Birmingham Caucus " in the skilful hands of Radical and republican plotters was said to be spreading its tentacles all over the country, sapping the independence of voters, undermining the authority of leaders, holding M.P.s in

thrall and threatening to deprive them of all liberty of thought and action. Two men were thought to be the prime authors of this iniquity, Joseph Chamberlain and his henchman, Schnadhorst, and of the two, Schnadhorst was supposed to be the more cunning and dangerous. His name suggested un-English methods, he worked behind the scenes in dark places where he could not be traced; he was, for all good Conservatives, the hidden hand, the man of wrath.

The actual truth is less romantic. If to possess a Liberal Association is to be "caucus-ridden," the honour or discredit of being first in the field in that respect does not belong to Birmingham or to Chamberlain. It probably belongs to John Bright, who had started a Liberal Association in Rochdale in the early 'thirties. But forty years later the Birmingham Association undoubtedly held the place of honour in the Liberal scheme of organization. With Joseph Chamberlain as its leader it had taken municipal politics under its wing and established an unchallengeable ascendancy in its own city. By carefully instructing the Liberal electors how to distribute their two votes between three candidates, it had carried all three seats in Birmingham and defeated the greatly resented intention of the Legislature to force a Tory on to the constituency in the name of minority representation. These and similar feats of skill and discipline had made its name famous among the other Associations and won both fame and odium for its

secretary, Mr. Schnadhorst. It was natural, then, for Birmingham to take the lead in any forward movement, and when in 1877 it proposed to federate all the English and Welsh Liberal Associations in a National Liberal Federation, the other Associations enthusiastically agreed and chose Birmingham as the home of the new organization and Mr. Schnadhorst as its first Secretary. Mr. Gladstone addressed its inaugural meeting in the Bingley Hall on May 31, 1877 and, during the next three years it supported him enthusiastically in his campaign against Lord Beaconsfield and contributed substantially to the great Liberal victory of 1880. A young man coming to Birmingham in the early 'eighties would have heard great stories of this heroic age, and they no doubt reached the ears and unsettled the mind of Robert Hudson, when he started out to earn his living in that city.

By the year 1882, the place had become the storm-centre of Liberal and Radical politics. Mr. Gladstone's Government had suffered many misfortunes in the first two years of its existence, and a veiled struggle was already going on in the Cabinet between the Whigs, who looked to Lord Hartington as their spokesman, and the Radicals, of whom Chamberlain was the acknowledged leader. But in these years, as throughout his life, Chamberlain was Birmingham, and Birmingham Chamberlain, and wherever he led, the men of Birmingham were ready to follow. From now onwards to the General Election Chamberlain

made Birmingham the base of his operations, and in 1884 when he launched his "Unauthorized Programme" he had in his native city by far the most effective machinery for political propaganda that any party then possessed. What with the franchise agitation and the subsequent attack on the Whigs, Birmingham seethed with politics between 1882 and 1885.

It was into this world of zealous agitators that Robert Hudson launched himself at the age of eighteen. The details of the next few years are scanty but it is agreed that by the time he was twenty Schnadhorst had singled him out as the most promising of his young men, and that he was being entrusted with work which was ordinarily given to only the most experienced hands. An exciting little glimpse of him remained in the memory of an old Birmingham Radical only recently dead, who said to the end of his life that his most vivid recollection of the famous, or notorious, Aston riots was that of Robert Hudson standing, after the meeting had been broken up, on what should have been the speakers' table and—it is to be feared—waving his hat. It is also definitely on record that the day after (October 14, 1884) he went to Highbury to report to Mr. Chamberlain on the events of this "stricken field."

The full narrative of this affair may be found, very vivaciously told, in Mr. Winston Churchill's Life of his father, Lord Randolph Churchill, but the chief incidents in it may be briefly recalled. As a counter

to a great anti-House of Lords demonstration held in Birmingham during the summer, Lord Randolph conceived the idea of invading Birmingham in force and opening a week of campaigning with a great demonstration in Aston Park to be attended by a phalanx of Conservative members and certain of the most respected leaders of the party, including Sir Stafford Northcote. This invasion of their citadel seemed to the Liberals of Birmingham an unheard-of audacity requiring them to take spirited measures, lest the voice of Birmingham should be misrepresented. Thus, when the Tories proceeded to issue 120,000 tickets, they obtained in one way or another large blocks of these, and, when the supply ran short, were alleged to have replenished it with facsimiles. Having in this way provided for the peaceful penetration of their opponents' meeting, they summoned a meeting of their own on a waste piece of ground just outside the walls of Aston Park, where some fifteen thousand persons assembled. It happened that afternoon that ladders were standing outside the wall, and with the aid of these and a battering-ram of planks, a storming party breached the wall and joined their friends the ticket-holders who were inside. There followed a free fight in which platforms were stormed, heads broken, and the Conservative leaders badly hustled. The fireworks were let off in daylight, and the principal set-piece—a portrait of Sir Stafford Northcote—upside down. Happily no lives were

lost, but the recrimination which followed rang through the country and came to its climax in what Mr. Churchill characterizes as "an extremely unpleasant debate" in the House of Commons, in the course of which Lord Randolph made a slashing attack upon the "corrupt oligarchy" which ruled Birmingham through the caucus.

What Robert said to Mr. Chamberlain on the morning after can unfortunately only be guessed. Though it is impossible to think of him as having at any time of his life deliberately organized a breach of the peace, I can imagine him being extremely cool and skilful in preparing the case for the defence on behalf of superiors who were charged with that enormity. At all events when the "extremely unpleasant debate" came on, Mr. Chamberlain was well primed, and in what the contemporary records describe as a "dazzling speech" carried the war into the enemy's camp even more effectively than his friends who had breached the wall of Aston Park. But by that time Lord Randolph Churchill had played into his hands by a valiant declaration that the Conservatives of Birmingham were capable of defending themselves without calling on the police, and the public judged that, pugnacity for pugnacity, there was not much to choose between the rival factions.

For eighteen months longer the Birmingham Radicals were a happy and united family, and it was generally acknowledged that their bold initiative

had gone far to save the Liberal party from disaster at the 1885 election. Robert's special part at this election was to edit *The Cracker*—a comic sheet for the campaign run from Birmingham—for which he wrote much with his own hand. Eight months later the Birmingham edifice came crashing down. To the surprise of the whole country and most of all of the National Liberal Federation, Mr. Chamberlain declined to follow Mr. Gladstone, when, in the following year, he introduced his Home Rule Bill for Ireland. Mr. Chamberlain had, as he continued to say, been "a Home Ruler before Mr. Gladstone," and it had been taken for granted that he would be even more a Home Ruler after Mr. Gladstone. It was not so; he saw objections to Mr. Gladstone's Bill which, as he was never for half-way courses, rapidly developed into all-round and most damaging hostility.

This compelled the Federation to choose between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain, and for an organization which now represented not Birmingham only but the party as a whole, the issue was never in doubt. Though the dissentients were a powerful group and sufficient in numbers to shatter the party prospects for the time being, Mr. Gladstone's authority over the great majority of men calling themselves Liberals was beyond challenge in the country at large. Not, however, in Birmingham. There, Mr. Chamberlain remained supreme, and at the coming election transferred the whole representation of the City—

now increased to seven—from the Liberal to the Unionist party. From this time onwards and for the next fifty years, Birmingham remained the chief outpost of Unionism in the English provinces.

The blow was a staggering one to the Federation which saw itself threatened with a ruinous schism, but it stood upright after the first shock, and made its choice unhesitatingly at a meeting in the Westminster Palace Hotel, London, on May 5, 1886. The issue was joined on a motion requesting Mr. Gladstone to accept the principal amendment to his Bill—that providing for the retention of the Irish members in the Imperial Parliament—but it quickly became evident that this covered a deep-seated hostility to the whole of Mr. Gladstone's policy, and after the President, Sir James Kitson, had declined to move it from the Chair, it was rejected by an overwhelming majority in favour of an alternative resolution which assured Mr. Gladstone of the Federation's "earnest support in the present crisis." This entailed the secession of practically the entire group of Birmingham politicians who had played the principal part in building up the Federation, but with few exceptions the agents and servants of the Federation stood firm, and none firmer than Mr. Schnadhorst, their famous chief, or his assistant, Robert Hudson. It was said in after days that Mr. Schnadhorst's too sanguine estimate of the results of an election fought on Home Rule had seriously misled Mr. Gladstone when he

decided to stake his fortunes on an appeal to the country in June, 1886. If so, it was not the first time, or the last, that a political organizer had failed to measure the force of the silent vote in the country. Mr. Schnadhorst could plead that all the outward and visible signs looked favourable. Not one Liberal Association had withdrawn from the Federation in consequence of its decision at the Westminster Palace Hotel meeting; fifty new Associations had been formed and come into the Federation within a month of that meeting; the rank and file were full of enthusiasm and the whole body of Liberal agents remained loyal. Nevertheless, the wavering voter decided the issue, and after the election the Liberal party found itself in a minority of 110 in the House of Commons. At this election Robert acted for the first and last time as a Liberal agent, serving in this capacity for his friend, W. H. Ballantine, at Coventry, and helping to snatch that brand from the general burning by a majority of 16.

By this time it was clear that Birmingham was, politically speaking, a very unsuitable location for the head-centre organization of the Liberal party, and in September 1886, the decision was taken to move to London, with the proviso that its annual meetings were always to be held in some provincial centre.

This was a decisive move for Robert, who at the age of twenty-two found himself transferred to London

and appointed as Assistant Secretary to his Chief, Schnadhorst, with every prospect of succeeding him as chief official of the Liberal party. To have got so far in so short a time was a remarkable feat for a young man of twenty-two, who had come in as a subordinate at the age of eighteen with no special qualification or backing to distinguish him from dozens of others who, four years later, would have been content with quite modest promotion. But in these four years—when other young men of his tastes and disposition were getting themselves educated or enjoying the sweets of life at Oxford and Cambridge—he had learnt the whole business of political organizer from personal contact and experience. He had done routine work in the office, acted as agent in a constituency, prepared election "literature," and as Schnadhorst's "favourite boy," seen the inner workings of the great machine. His friends in Birmingham gave him a dinner and presented him with a gold watch on his departure for London, and the speeches made on this occasion might have been tributes to a seasoned veteran, while brimming over with friendly and affectionate feeling for the "promising boy." He kept touch with Birmingham and often returned to it in later years, but from now to the end of his life London was to be his home.

CHAPTER II

FIRST YEARS IN LONDON

Palace Chambers and Dean's Yard—Early Friendships and Marriage—A Journey with Mr. Gladstone—The Making of Liberal Programmes—Arthur Acland and His Influence—An Invitation to Carnarvon and a Glimpse of Lloyd George—Tom Ellis, the Youthful Hero—The Rising Tide and a Set-back—Ellis's Illness—Domestic Happiness—The Election of 1892—Friends in the Government—A Hard-worked Parliament.

I WAS often at the offices of the National Liberal Federation in 1886 and 1887, and must have seen Robert many times, though my first clear recollection of him is not for several years later. But the picture of his master, Schnadhorst, remains imprinted on my memory. He was prematurely old and very deaf, and though he used an ear-trumpet, it was with difficulty that one could carry on a consecutive conversation with him. He seemed greatly broken by the disaster of 1886 and spoke despondently of politics and the prospects of the Liberal party. I imagine that he was only a shadow of the formidable figure which had inspired terror in the previous years, and in the next few years his health

was visibly declining. More and more work thus fell upon his Assistant Secretary, who was doing the chief part for some time before Schnadhorst finally resigned. But he too had a serious breakdown in December, 1887, and was ordered away for a long rest and change. So ill was he when he got to Folkestone, where he had meant to spend the night before crossing the Channel on his way to Algiers, that he found it impossible to go on and had to remain there a whole month before proceeding on his way. His father met him at Marseilles in the last week of April, but a month more had to be spent on a cure at Aix-les-Bains before he was fit to resume work.

On his return he moved from Palace Chambers, where he had taken rooms on first coming to London, and joined his friend, Ellis Griffith, in a ground floor flat in 14, Dean's Yard, Westminster. A note dated November 17, 1887, records how Griffith went into Trafalgar Square on "Black Sunday," the day of the famous riot, and had the misfortune to encounter a mounted policeman who knocked him down and punched him about the body, and sent him back to Dean's Yard dazed and bruised and clamouring for that officer's blood. Robert bound up his wounds and endeavoured to console him, but that day remained a rankling memory. Robert was now near the end of these bachelor days, and on October 3, 1889, he was married at Coventry to Ada, the daughter of Mr. Henry Hammerton of that city, and after a short honey-

moon in Paris, the newly married pair settled down in 39 Oakley Street, Chelsea, close to the Embankment and the Suspension Bridge which leads to Battersea Park. Ada Hudson was a gentle, lovable girl, devoted to her husband, as he to her, and they were serenely happy in their new home.

Let me try, if I can, to recover from memory, a little of the political atmosphere of these years. Liberals were by no means cast down by the reverse of 1886, and never for a moment dreamt of retreat from the Irish policy which had been the cause of their downfall. Their venerable leader was all on fire for that cause, and was persuaded that it was only necessary to spread the light to bring conviction to his countrymen. So at the age of 76 he started out on a campaign of conversion, which left his juniors panting behind him and kept the party machine at a white heat. Day after day and night after night in the House of Commons he fought every inch of the ground against the Coercion Bill, which was now the acknowledged Unionist alternative to Home Rule, and when the House was not sitting, he was either campaigning in the country or engaging innumerable correspondents in controversy. Just before his marriage it had fallen to Robert Hudson to organize a whirlwind tour for Mr. Gladstone to the West of England, and it is recorded in the annals of the Federation that the great man visited and spoke at Romsey, Weymouth, Dartmouth, Torquay, Falmouth, Redruth, Truro, St.

Austel, Bodmin, Launceston, Tavistock and Plymouth; and the mass meeting at the last place—presided over by the veteran Sir Thomas Acland—is described as the culminating triumph. Robert earned a special vote of thanks at the Manchester meeting of the Federation in the following year for his services on this occasion, and to the end of his life he remembered it as one of the great opportunities of his youth. The extraordinary glamour which the personality of Mr. Gladstone had for the young Liberals of those days is not easily realized by those who come after, for there has been nothing quite like it in the subsequent years. It was rapture to be permitted to shake his hand, to hear his voice, to look into his wonderful old face; but to be with him every day for a week, to arrange the intimate details of one of his triumphal progresses and to be the recipient of his confidences was a privilege beyond price for a young Secretary of twenty-five, and among his contemporaries, Robert shone in this reflected glory.

He was from the beginning an ardent Gladstonian and came away with his faith renewed, and a bundle of memories of Mr. Gladstone's kindness and courtesy and unvarying consideration for those who served him, mixed, but not qualified, by observation of his endearing little foibles and idiosyncrasies. But among the younger men of the party there was a certain anxiety in these years lest Mr. Gladstone's consuming zeal for the Irish cause should eat up the other social

and radical aims of the Liberal party ; and unceasing efforts went on behind the scenes to keep Mr. Gladstone balanced, and to develop a Liberal programme in which Home Rule, though occupying the first place, would not be the be-all and end-all of Liberal policy. The results were seen five years later in the Newcastle Programme, adopted at the Newcastle meeting of the Federation in 1891, a long and comprehensive rehearsal of the objects of Liberal policy covering the whole field of domestic politics and including such items as Scotch and Welsh disestablishment, payment of members, shortening of Parliaments, House of Lords reform, eight hours for miners, the provision of allotments, the setting up of parish and district councils, and Temperance reform. Looking backwards after forty years, we may find little in it which would distress a modern Conservative, but it caused a good deal of heart-searching at the time and some of the older members of the party were with difficulty brought to consent to it all. Lord Rosebery said rather pointedly a few years later that " it was not the officials of the party (i.e. leaders and whips) who had imposed this programme on the National Liberal Federation, it was the National Liberal Federation which had imposed it on the officials with all its consequences good and evil." This was true and in accordance with the tradition of independence from leaders which the Federation had always cherished. During these years the business of working at the

details of Liberal policy was done not by the leaders but by the Federation, or by unofficial members of the party in and out of Parliament, working in association with it.

The leading spirits were some half dozen young men who had lately come into Parliament—of whom H. H. Asquith, Edward Grey, Arthur Acland, Tom Ellis, R. B. Haldane, Sydney Buxton, Augustine Birrell and Frank Lockwood were the chief. They dined together periodically and worked in concert preparing amendments to Bills passing through the House, resolutions to be proposed when opportunity offered, and schemes of policy to be worked into the programme of the party. Robert quickly became the link between this group and the Federation, and some of them—especially Tom Ellis and Arthur Acland[1]—were in the next few years his most intimate friends. Acland was still steward of Christ Church and out-bursar of Balliol when I was an undergraduate at Balliol, but his mind was set on Parliament and he was the political mentor and sponsor of a group of undergraduates who met at his house on Sunday afternoons and called themselves with youthful arrogance the "Inner Ring." Tom Ellis was of this company and I myself too, and it was through Acland and Ellis, both of whom came into Parliament at the 1885 election, that I first got to know Robert Hudson.

[1] For further references to this group see Lord Oxford's "Memories and Reflections" Vol. I. 157 and Lord Morley's "Recollections" Vol. I. pp. 323-4

Both Acland and Ellis were very remarkable men. Acland was the forerunner of a long line of academic politicians who have since done the spade-work of social reform, and he had come into Liberal politics by way of the Co-operative movement, the chiefs of which had sought his advice on the educational side of their movement. In early life he had made a false start by taking orders in the Church of England, and the fact that he had unfrocked himself on discovering that this was not his vocation, created an abiding prejudice against him among the clergy and clerically minded and made his relations with his own family somewhat uneasy. But as George Meredith said about John Morley, there was still a clergyman inside him when you cut him open, and he carried into politics much of the zeal and serious-mindedness that he had brought to the cure of souls. He made friends easily with men younger than himself, and while still at Oxford took up his parable against the frigid and mechanical ideas which threatened to exclude social reform from Liberal politics and turn Liberalism into a middle-class dogma. His experience with the Co-operative movement had brought him into touch with workmen all over the country, and to study and understand the workman's point of view and the workman's needs was, he kept preaching to us, the one thing necessary for a living Liberal party.

At the general election of 1885 he was candidate for Rotherham, where he was elected by an immense

majority, and I was with him for some part of the election. He had welcomed the Chamberlain "unauthorized programme" as a sign of awakening in the Liberal party, but he distrusted Chamberlain's methods and doubted whether his campaign would prove more than what is now called a " stunt." Work and much more work, he kept saying, would be needed before most of the subjects which the Radical leader had handled in his effective platform way could be turned into useful legislation ; and when in the following year the Liberal party was driven into opposition, he set himself and urged others to do the work. In a few months he was mapping out the whole field of possible Liberal legislation and dividing it up among his friends for study. At this time I was editing a newspaper in Hull, but he corresponded with me regularly, and urged me in my spare time, which was very little and which I preferred to spend on cricket and tennis, to collect facts and figures from the adjacent Lincolnshire and East Riding villages as a contribution to a rural Liberal programme. When the Conservative Local Government Bill came in in 1888, he again set me to work to devise Liberal amendments, and I produced a whole sheaf, one or two of which were moved by his group in the House of Commons. Later he assigned to me the question of Old Age Pensions, of which he was one of the earliest advocates, and after visiting aged and ageing workmen in all parts of East London, I produced a little

book in the Social Science Series, advocating the non-contributory scheme which was adopted fourteen years later.

Acland in these days had a house at Clynnog, on a charming part of the North Wales coast in Carnarvonshire, and there he invited his political friends and plunged them into Welsh politics. Both Robert and I stayed with him, though not, I think, at the same time, and we found him in those years deeply engaged in the affairs of the Carnarvon Boroughs, where a young Welshman, by name Lloyd George, was said to be putting up a remarkably good fight. A letter to Robert, dated January 26th, 1889, has a curious interest in the light of after events :

Will you come down here from Feb. 8. to 11., Friday to Monday. Will you kindly ask Ellis Griffiths to do the same.

I hope to get Ellis [i.e. T. E. Ellis] and shall in any case have two or three choice young radical spirits and can have a symposium on Welsh politics and roam the hills and shore. Do come.

Will you tell me privately whether you think it would be of the slightest use my asking John Morley to come down to Carnarvon to speak some Saturday night during the session ? We must win the Carnarvon Boroughs and if you look at the County Council elections you will see that it is just *there* that we are weak. The Tories have got a very successful and attractive Club at Carnarvon, and the Liberalism of the place is going back for want of organization. Carnarvon may be fairly called the capital of North Wales and the Pavilion where Lord Salisbury spoke a few months ago is the great hall for speeches in North Wales. . . . .

The Welsh national feeling is very strongly brought out by these County Council elections. It is extremely strong and growing daily—in the country districts.

Lloyd George, the candidate for Carnarvon Boroughs, is a nice fellow.

Whether Robert went to Clynnog and met the future Prime Minister among "the choice young radical spirits" is not recorded. I should say that he probably did, for we seldom ventured to disobey Acland when he had seriously set his mind on our doing what he wanted. He even commanded me, when I was staying at Clynnog, to take the chair at a village Eisteddfod—he himself being kept in the house by a severe cold—and I remember with remorse to this day that in reading out the awards for a sewing competition I read a certain word which recurred at short intervals as "lib," thinking it to be a technical term that was unfamiliar to me. I was unaware then, and but for this incident should probably be now, that the upper part of an apron is termed a "bib."

We all had a great respect and a very real affection for Acland, but Tom Ellis was our youthful political hero, and from 1887, when they first met, to Ellis's death in 1898, he was Robert's closest friend. Had anyone asked us in those days what Welshman would one day be Prime Minister, we should have answered without a moment's hesitation, Tom. I had known him at Oxford in my undergraduate days, for he

was at New College when I was at Balliol, and if I remember rightly, I met him first at the house of that zealous Welshman and Celtic scholar, John Rhys, the Master of Jesus. He was then, as later, the picture of ardent effervescing Celtic youth, tall, red-haired, loose-limbed, with eagerness written all over him, and especially in his bright eyes and sensitive face. He was strikingly good-looking, but his attractiveness lay in his always being lit up, and he spread enthusiasm and cheerfulness wherever he went. *Tu Marcellus eris.* Probably even in those days he had in him the seeds of the disease which brought him to an early grave; certainly he gave the impression of burning with a peculiar intensity.

On leaving Oxford, Ellis became private secretary to Sir John Brunner, and in 1886 was elected Liberal member for Merionethshire, thus entering Parliament at the age of 27. He was already intimate with Acland and within a year was on terms of the warmest friendship with Robert, whom he seems to have met first at the house of Mr. James Rowlands. "I cannot ever sufficiently thank you," he writes while on a journey with Acland in the Tyrol, "for your extreme kindness to me. I often, very often, think of the evening I first met you, and I have always a kindlier feeling for James Rowlands, when I think that it was he who brought us together. Some of the pleasantest hours of my life have been spent since then and since then some of the most joyous memories

of pure friendship have been stored up in my heart." "Really, Robert," he goes on, "I am literally enveloped in your kindness. I sally out with your hat on my head and your stick in my hand. I sit down and survey wild scenery through your glass. I come back and write an occasional letter on your paper. I send a note to you, and lo! a letter laden with glad tidings and a couple of bundles of home newspaper. Another grip of your hand and a chat will crown all."

The two men were in fact inseparable. Ellis, between 1886 and 1892, was shaping for the work which he did as Whip when the party came to power, and what he did in Parliament and Robert was doing in Parliament Street were subjects of daily consultation between them. They shared their sports and their pleasures and compared notes about their favourite authors. Robert had always a lively interest and fastidious taste in literature, and Ellis entered with his customary enthusiasm into a literary argument.

The Liberal party was in high spirits in the years between 1887 and 1890. The grand old warrior was on the war-path and a troop of zealous young men followed him enthusiastically. New friendships were being formed with the Irish party who, under the Balfourian regime, were always in and out of prison; and it became part of Robert's duties to capture them in their intervals of liberty and bring them to

bear on English and Welsh constituencies. He records with triumph that he has secured William O'Brien to speak in Ellis's constituency, and Ellis replies that the service is beyond thanks. Everything seemed to be prospering, and one by-election after another showed the tide to be running strongly against the Unionist party. By the summer of 1890 the Parnell Commission and the exposure of the Pigott forgery seemed to be the final blow to the Government, and no Liberal doubted that Mr. Gladstone would shortly come back to power with a majority large enough to carry a Home Rule Bill through the House of Commons and probably to overcome the opposition of the House of Lords. In October, 1890, Ellis wrote to Hudson that he and Acland had spent a pleasant afternoon together "Cabinet-making"—always an agreeable sport for politicians out of power but expecting to be in it.

Then suddenly came the crash of the Parnell divorce, changing and blighting the whole prospect. Robert had no doubt that it was "entirely damnable" and the sanguine Ellis had for once no comfort to offer. The Irish party was broken, the Liberal party distracted, and the flowing tide lamentably checked. In the very middle of the catastrophe the National Liberal Federation was holding its annual meeting at Sheffield, and the chosen spokesmen, among whom were Sir William Harcourt and John Morley, were

reduced to embarrassed silence on the only subject that was in the minds of their hearers. Sir William said allusively that Liberal principles "did not depend upon time or season or upon the conduct of this man or that," and Mr. Morley said that, if the next election were to be lost, he would still rejoice in what had been done during the previous five years. But this was cold comfort to men who had never dreamt of the next election being lost and saw no cause for rejoicing in the prospect of the five years' work yielding only a moral consolation to philosophically-minded statesmen.

The blow was a shattering one to men like Robert and Tom Ellis, who had put the whole of themselves into the five years' work and now saw it ruined at a stroke. A week before they had desired nothing so much as the early collapse of the Government and the chance of joining issue in the country; now they were reduced to hoping that the dissolution might be delayed to the last possible moment and time be given for the weather to clear and the party to steady itself.

But Robert never let politics depress him for long and at the end of this year (1890) he was again in high spirits and rejoicing in the birth of a daughter. He reports himself as in the best of health and humour and his wife doing splendidly. But in the meantime there was great anxiety about Tom Ellis, who, after grave warning from his doctor about the state of one

lung, had been sent on a voyage to South Africa. He went reluctantly and for many weeks seemed no better. "I was on board a mere lotus-eater," he wrote from Port Elizabeth, "living a life of summer idling on summer seas—now and then disturbed by poignant longing, by bitter regret at my exile, and by harassing reflections on the danger to our political hopes from this thrice cursed O'Shea business." A month later he has to report that the doctor declines to give him a clear bill of health. "My right side is very far from right. It has made me reflective." I can find only this one sentence about himself in two long letters to Robert brimful of chaff and intimate allusion to homely matter:

Your long delightful letters which have given and still give me so much joy, make me long to see you terribly. It was an unspeakable pleasure to me to learn of the birth of your little daughter, that Mrs. Hudson was well, and that the little visitor spreads such happiness in that household which is sacred in my mind and memories. I often picture to myself how the new presence illumines your house. And heaven knows that you deserve every joy possible. The immense work you have had to go through, and this Parnell tornado, must be dead-weights on your spirit, but I trust that young life will grow to dispel or brighten every cloud. I feel life is brighter for me in the very thought of the happiness of yourself and Mrs. Hudson.

Your two letters were as exhilarating to me as a sight of the little stream that plays and tumbles through my father's fields. . . . I am very much amused at your more than Scotch cautiousness in not venturing to forecast the issue of the

fearful and momentous struggle through which you are passing. Every word about it from you is real news and matter to me—so different from the long rigmaroles one reads in the papers. So I cannot disguise the fact that I weigh your words most carefully—and that when I again have the intense pleasure of a long chat with you, I shall recall to you your vaticinations and predictions and quick may the time come when we may make merry over them.

Letters from Ellis seem to have failed during the next few weeks for there is a *cri de coeur* from Robert at the end of January :

House of Commons,
S.W.
Thurs. Jan. 24. 1891.

My dear Tom,

You are a bold, bad man—and likewise a most atrocious correspondent.

Never mind ! As they say at the Surrey Theatre,

"A TIME WILL COME"

Indeed now I come to think of it, the time *has* come ! ! ! Here am I brimming over with exciting news ; full of entertaining anecdotes ; charged with priceless "tips," and all manner of "exclusive" pars. Do you suppose for one moment that I am going to heap coals of fire upon your head by unloading myself in this letter of even a part of that precious freight !

Not a bit of it ! !

Rather would I work it up into snappy paragraphs for the National Press Agency and draw the resultant " bobs."

No, Thomas ! Emphatically *No.*

Just cast up the account between us to date ! ! ! It stands somewhat thusly :

Thomas E. Ellis Esq., M.P.
Africa.

Dr. to Robt. A. Hudson,
Exporter of News and Newspapers,
42, Parliament Street, S.W.

1890.	November	To 10 dozen extra long Super-fine Letters at 20/-	6	0	0
	December				
1891	January	„ 1250 Newspapers, say at 3d.	15	12	6
			£21	12	6
		Credit: By 1 short letter 2 10 0			
		1 post card 1 0 0	3	10	0
		Balance due to R.A.H.	£18	2	6

Now, Mr. Thomas, just you start to wipe that off.

I'm a careful calculating cove, and I can't stand any larger balance than that.

Of course a substantial payment on account would go a long way towards reassuring me.

But Oh, dear! Oh dear! To think that that long-looked-for Mauritius mail should at length have come and brought me nothing!!! And I've a wretched bad cold and stand woefully in need of a nice pick-me-up!

My wife sends kindest greetings. So does the babe, but she, little innocent, knows not the manner of man thou art.

As for me, I simply say,

"The favour of an early remittance is requested by
Your obedient servant,"
ROBT.

Another letter about the same time shows what the life of the Assistant Secretary was in these years :—

House of Commons,
S.W.

My dear old Tom,

It's no use sending for a sheet of thinner paper. It is really too late and I'm too tired to properly cover half an ounce of *this*.

For 3 weeks past I have kept woefully, wickedly, busy. Of home-life I've really seen nothing. With good luck I get up to 39 at 9 or 9.30. By this time dinner has come to be called supper. When I've finished my meal and smoked a single cigarette it is 11 and I'm too tired and sleepy to sit longer.

Such is life—for an Assistant Secretary of a National Liberal Fedn. ! If it were not for the hour in the morning and the hour at night *when my slippers are on*, I should be miserable I do believe. As it is, so far from being miserable, I'm as happy as any man in London, and I do think almost as hard-worked, too.

The A—— election has dropped a fair lot of worry on to my shoulders this week. No one else seemed inclined to tackle it. Things were going very badly down in the constituency. They have got a wretched incapable agent (a local man)—a dear good, useless kind of candidate—and a tuppeny happeny lot of meddlesome Club busybodies who elected themselves an Election Committee, or something of the sort, at the outset. Then nobody knew when the writ would be issued. And further no one could determine when they would like it to be issued. A. S. and B., the agent, the 2½d. lot and sundry others " conferred " day after day. While they " conferred ", no one worked. So I added things up, came to the conclusion that the sooner we went in at it, the better—got the august Arnold[1] to look at it through the same glasses—got him next to see the wily Akers[2]—got them both to agree that it was no good letting the business dribble into the Easter holiday—and

[1] Mr. Arnold Morley, Chief Liberal Whip.
[2] Mr. Akers Douglas, Chief Conservative Whip.

finally, got the writ moved yesterday. Then opening with Thursday evening I made up a bag of 20 M.P.'s for 10 day's meetings ; managed to introduce two astute agents to "assist" the local nincompoop—in reality to manage him ;—roused up poor B. a bit ; worried the R. people into a semblance of activity ; wrote a spiteful leaflet and compiled a mendacious poster ; and—well ! am continuing, and shall continue, on these lines until the poll is declared this night week.

But the Assistant Secretary had his hours of ease, and by the beginning of July has taken a house by the sea at Happisburgh in Norfolk, and is begging his friends to come and visit him :

Happisburgh,
by Stalham,
Norfolk.
Wed. July 1. 1891.

My dear Acland,

We *did* get here in spite of

1 Baby
1 nurse—

and 18 (other) articles of baggage.

But it was a desperate, titanic undertaking ; a thing only to be ventured once a year, and then after much anxious thought and preparation.

It would be very pleasant for us if you and Tom would come down for a week-end this month.

I really don't know what you and he would think of the place ! You would say we had cracked it up too much, and would compare it—to Hasbro's disfavour—with Clynnog,[1] Cynlas, and other nooks of that hill-country of yours. So let me just say

[1] Mr. Acland's house in Carnarvonshire.

(1) that the scenery is Dutch, not Welsh.
(2) that there isn't a single "show" object in the district.
(3) that we are the only visitors in the place.
(4) that the cookery is emphatically "plain"—'not to put too fine a point on it.'
(5) that we should have to *bed* you across at the Inn—(which, miserable wretch that the landlord is—has grown—so far as the signboard goes, into an *Hotel* since our last visit.)

(Robt.)

Happisburgh,
by Stalham,
Norfolk.
July 9, 1891.

My dear Tom,

Allah Akbar! There is only one Tom, and his surname is Ellis!

Your flippant epistle duly reached me. But why, my dear Tom, don't you write every day, as you promised to do with tears and sobs when we parted?

Thank heaven there are the public prints. From them I get some idea of what you and the German Emperor are doing each day. Otherwise I should go mad.

Love from
Robt.

The rest of the year and the first five months of the following year passed feverishly in preparations for the election which, it was now clear, must take place in the summer of 1892. Parliaments were still by law septennial, but six years was the customary

term of the strongest Government, and by August in that year Lord Salisbury's Government would have run its course. A large part of the work of preparation fell upon Robert who, as always, kept up the pressure on his superiors to get candidates allotted in good time and the activities of leaders well spread over the country. The party had rallied from the blow of the Parnell divorce, and no one in the inner circle doubted that the Government would be defeated or that plans must be laid for the kind of Government that would succeed it. It was agreed among Robert's friends that Mr. Gladstone should be asked and, if need be, pressed to bring a certain number of young men of the advanced group into his Cabinet, and that there should be a certain amount of common action for this purpose. As usual at such times, alternative lists went round the circle and were eagerly canvassed and criticized.

These chickens are always counted before they are hatched, and when the election came there were moments when the hatching of any of them seemed highly doubtful. In the end the party scraped together a majority of forty including the deeply divided Irish, whose quarrels with each other and the very doubtful adherence of some of them to the Liberal party made the future extremely uncertain. Extraordinarily difficult problems now presented themselves to both leaders and organizers, but Robert was judged to have done extremely well and his

services were acknowledged in a special resolution of thanks which was accompanied by a handsome cheque. When the Government was formed he had the satisfaction of seeing two of his particular friends brought in, Arthur Acland in the Cabinet as Minister for Education—then called Vice-President of the Council—and Tom Ellis in the position of Junior Whip from which he was promoted to Chief Whip when Edward Marjoribanks succeeded to a peerage on the death of his father in 1894. Acland and Ellis were now more than ever hand in glove, and Robert was their link with the organization, and I myself, to a certain extent, their link with the press. More than ever Acland preached from his favourite text that, while Mr. Gladstone was compelled to pursue his tremendous and fruitless task of carrying through the Commons a Home Rule Bill which was doomed to extinction in the Lords, the Liberal party would be ruined if its fortunes were staked on this alone, and it seemed blind to the urgent needs of Great Britain as well as Ireland.

This view prevailed and for three years this Parliament worked as till then no Parliament had ever worked, pushing on with highly controversial measures, though its life hung on a thread, getting itself into constant hot water with parson, brewer and landlord, and challenging the wealthy with its death duties and democratic finance. There was no rest for Minister or Member; with majorities vary-

ing from eighteen to eight every man had to be accounted for in the division lobby, and, what was specially Robert's work, the machine kept in readiness for the dissolution which might come at any moment.

After my marriage in 1892 I settled in a house (in Cheyne Walk) only a few doors removed from Robert's, and in the same year, Acland took the house next door to mine in order, as he said, that he might be near to both of us. For the next three years we were a compact little group, Acland the Cabinet Minister, Ellis the Whip, Robert the organizer, and I the journalist, at first on the *Pall Mall Gazette* and then on the *Westminster Gazette*. E. T. Cook, my chief on the *Pall Mall* and *Westminster*, looked on benevolently and was only too willing that our combined thoughts should find expression in the newspaper. Acland kept us at it with whip and spur, and I still very vividly remember his unceasing incitements to more and more activity, his eagle eye for administrative abuses crying out for reform, not in his own Department only, but in all Departments, his disappointment when we seemed to flag or sought holidays or diversions in these critical days. There were times when our wives (Hudson's as well as mine) rose in rebellion against his encroachments on our dinner-hours and our Sabbaths ; but he was unsparing of himself, and if illness overtook him, he would summon us to his bedside, where we found him in

a litter of blue-books and Cabinet papers, faint but pursuing.

No man can ever have worked harder in these years than Robert, and these details may help to show the position he held even at this early time. He was even then the friend and confidant of those whom he served; he was consulted about the policy of the party and contributed to it, and whatever secrets there might be he knew them as well as any man outside the Cabinet. Clever as he was at organization, his interests were first of all in the thing to be organized; and he had an intuitive shrewdness in his judgment of men and a suppleness in handling them which had high value in the management of the somewhat unruly team of which then and later the Liberal party was composed.

CHAPTER III

THE ORGANIZER AND HIS WORK

Appointment as Secretary to the N.L.F.—A Dual Office—The Liberal Central Association and its Functions — A Working Partnership — Robert's Friendships and their Value—The Duties of the Secretary—Visitors to the Office—Supplying Candidates—Arranging Public Meetings—Difficulties with the Star Performers—Providing "Literature"—The Liberal Publication Department—*The Liberal Magazine*—The Rev. Tobias Boffin.

IN the autumn of 1893 Mr. Schnadhorst resigned his position as secretary of the National Liberal Federation, and Robert was unanimously appointed to fill his place. He thus at the age of twenty-nine became the "principal organizer," as the position is popularly called, of the Liberal party.

But he was a little more than that, and at this point it may be well to describe more precisely what his duties were and the nature of the organization of which he was the chief official. He succeeded not to one office, but to two, for in the year 1886, at the instance of Mr. Arnold Morley, then Chief Whip, the secretaryship of the Federation had been combined with the secretaryship of the Liberal Central Associa-

tion in the person of one official, and Robert, like his predecessor, held both these offices.

The Liberal Central Association may be roughly described as the Whips' organization. It was supported by private subscriptions and stood in a special and confidential relation to the leaders of the party. It provided the Chief Whip with the machinery for dispensing the party fund, which in those days was entirely in his hands. Tradition was strong on the point that the Chief Whip and the Chief Whip alone should have this responsibility and that he should not share it with the leaders of the party. In this way it was believed that the best security was offered that policy should not be influenced by money or the leaders of the party add to their power over it by the control of its purse. By joining up its secretaryship with that of the National Liberal Federation, this inner-ring confidential organization brought itself into touch with the self-governing democratic machine, and it became a chief part of the duties of the holder of the two offices to act as a bridge between the Federation and the Liberal Central. The two bodies were in those days practically under one roof, the Liberal Central occupying No. 41, and the Federation No. 42 Parliament Street, and the Secretary could pass through communicating doors from the one to the other. It should be added that the Chief Whip had his own Political Secretary, Mr. (afterwards Sir) Jesse Herbert, and his own Private Secretary, Mr. R.

Humphrey Davies, with both of whom Robert had intimate relations.

Formally and logically, every sort of objection could be taken to this arrangement. The Federation prided itself on its independence of official control, yet its Secretary was also Secretary of the official organization. To serve these two masters in a manner to give satisfaction to both might well have seemed impossible to a man who took a formal view of his duties, or to any man who had not an uncommon stock of tact and common sense. It was Robert's chief achievement that he not only made this arrangement work, but made it work in such a way over a long period of years that it was acknowledged by both the parties to it to be the best possible arrangement. In the years of difficulties about leadership and threatened schisms between sections of the party in Parliament, it kept the confidential organization in touch with the rank and file in the country, and placed the party machine in a position in which it was safe from capture by any section. Robert, acting with the Chief Whip, did invaluable work in this direction during and after the Boer War, and what he and Lord Gladstone contributed by their co-operation to the victory of 1906 can hardly be exaggerated.

That the Secretary of the Federation never found himself at variance with the Secretary of the Liberal Central, and that he was never charged by either of his masters with betraying the one to the other, or

favouring the one at the expense of the other, is a fact which speaks volumes both for his own discretion and straightforwardness and for the goodwill with which men will work together in a common cause. But once more Robert owed this success to the fact that he was not merely the paid official of these organizations, but also, and even more important, the intimate friend and counsellor of those whom he served. They came and they went, were in office and out of it, but he was always at his post, placing at their disposal his accumulating experience, and his unique knowledge of the circumstances and personnel of politics in six hundred constituencies. He had an extraordinary memory for names, faces and local conditions. You might ask him on the spur of the moment to tell you the conditions in a particular constituency, what chiefly interested it, and the names of the local Liberal leaders, and he would scarcely ever fail. He was thus a permanent link between the official leaders and the constituencies, and he was expected to keep the leaders informed of what he believed to be the movements of opinion, and to see that no part of the country was neglected or unvisited by the star performers.

His duties were multifarious and exacting. There was the routine work of the Federation, the meetings of its Executive, and its annual Conference, the preparation of which entailed a vast deal of correspondence and personal interchange of views. There

were the unceasing visits of local politicians seeking advice about affairs in general, or the names of likely men to submit to their Associations as candidates for Parliament. The theory that these Associations were free to accept or reject the candidates submitted to them was scrupulously maintained, and not seldom acted upon. But as Robert's correspondence shows, the local Liberals were always coming to London or writing to London, to know what men were available, and pleading their special and imperative need for candidates who combined all the virtues, who were good speakers, sound party men, had distinguished names, agreeable manners, and well-filled purses. Often it had to be explained to them that these paragons were not to be had in unlimited numbers, and Robert was very skilful in writing letters explaining the points of seemingly less desirable candidates and indicating the rich reward that might await a constituency which had the perspicacity to choose some as yet unknown but undoubtedly gifted young man. These responsibilities were divided between the local associations, the Whips and the Secretary to the Federation, but as the period of a general election approached the number of unallotted seats was always a growing anxiety, and Robert, who carried the figures in his head, was perpetually urging the other parties to quicken their pace in filling those gaps.

Another part of the Secretary's duties was the planning of public meetings and supplying speakers to

address them. This may seem a simple matter, but in reality it was full of pitfalls. The star performers were few and everybody wanted them. Everybody wanted Mr. Gladstone, even claimed a right to be addressed by Mr. Gladstone, and he had to be spread out all over the country so as to give the least offence. If he had gone West in March, he had to go North in July; an eye had to be kept on great towns which represented that it was years since they had been visited by Mr. Gladstone, and were beginning to feel that they were left out in the cold. Mr. Gladstone was willing, but at the age of eighty and upwards there were limits even to his capacity and endurance. Some of the other stars were as difficult to deal with as prima donnas. They would not go here or there, or accept this chairman or the other, or take the risk of finding a small meeting or being neglected by the reporters. To get two of them on to the same platform, especially in times when party differences were acute, required a most careful diplomacy. A star has been known to cry off at the last moment on discovering that he was to share the honours of an evening with another star. These infirmities of noble minds could be richly illustrated from Robert's correspondence, but this part of his work he rightly regarded as strictly confidential.

I am speaking of a bygone time when the star performer had a vogue and a scope which is no longer within his reach. If he was in the highest flight he

could rely with certainty on being reported verbatim by every newspaper which took itself seriously, and to fall from the verbatim class to the column class or be gulfed in the half-column class was for him the greatest catastrophe. He was, therefore, naturally sensitive about any stage management which reflected on his position. In the early 'nineties I published in the *Westminster Gazette* an annual class-list of politicians graded according to the reports accorded to them in the newspapers during the previous year. The first class consisted of those who were reported verbatim, the second of those who were given a column, the third of those who got only half a column, and the fourth of those who had to be content with a "stick" or a paragraph. Robert implored me to stop it. He said it was destroying the nerve and spoiling the temper of his stars and making his work much more difficult. I did stop it, but about the same time the newspapers were stopping it too, having come to the conclusion that they could supply their readers with more entertaining matter than the copious utterances in which the great confided their thoughts to an unlistening world.

In the times in which we live, even an ex-Prime Minister may think himself fortunate if he finds a half column summary of his great speech on the previous night in the morning papers. Whether this has rendered easier the task of those who organize public meetings I do not know, but in Robert's day the

newspaper side of the business had to be most seriously considered. With all its deference to the politicians, even the old Press complained when two or three stars appeared on the platform the same night and required them to devote pages of the next morning's issue to their combined outpourings; and the stars themselves were embittered at seeing public attention thus distracted from the supreme utterance of the night. It thus became part of the organizer's business to establish a sort of clearing-house for public speakers and by comparing notes with his opponents to see that, for example, Mr. Gladstone, Lord Salisbury and Mr. Chamberlain were not all down to speak on the same night.

It was also his business to see that the party was supplied with "literature," the name which is indulgently used for the leaflets, pamphlets, squibs and cartoons which it scatters broadcast at election times. Acland was specially zealous about this and in 1887 stirred the Federation up to establish a Liberal Publication Department, over which he and Lord (then Mr. James) Bryce presided, and a great deal of the work of which fell upon Robert. I was associated with this Department from 1891 onwards and in 1893, together with Hudson and Acland, planned and brought out the first numbers of *The Liberal Magazine*. This was modelled on Acland and Ransome's well-known handbook of English history, in which events and dates are recorded on one page and notes or

extracts from documents bearing on those events on the opposite page. The *Magazine* similarly gave (and gives still) a list of political events, debates in Parliament, speeches in the country, by-elections, etc., under their dates on one page, and extracts from speeches or notes relating to those events on the opposite page ; and followed this calendar with sections dealing in detail with the more important events and issues. I got into sad trouble over the first number, for I had fallen into the trap of giving the extracts from speeches the dates on which they had been reported in the newspapers instead of the dates (i.e. the previous day) on which they had been delivered. Robert, who had an eagle eye for such things, discovered this just when the first sheets had been printed, and sent for me hurriedly to know what was to be done about it. I was greatly abashed, but ventured the unscrupulous suggestion that if the first sheets were permitted to go out, no one would discover the mistake and not much harm be done. He seemed immeasurably shocked at my levity, and insisted on cancelling all the sheets, and sat me down there and then to make the corrections and prepare the new sheets.

It was the habit of Liberal politicians in these days to brighten their lives with little jests, some of which were very ingeniously organized and kept up for months or even years together. Most of these have lost their savour with the lapse of time, but one which

was the special invention of Robert and his brother-in-law, Charles Geake, will bear revival. They sat down together about the year 1894 and created an imaginary character of the name of Boffin—" the Rev. Tobias Boffin, B.A. (Lond)." He was supposed to be a Baptist Minister, living in the north of England who had conceived a special hatred for Mr. Birrell, then member for West Fife ; and a whole group of conspirators, including Lord Rosebery, Tom Ellis, Sir Charles Russell, by this time Lord Chief Justice, and Sir Frank Lockwood, Solicitor General, were brought into the plot. Cards were printed for Boffin and sent in to Birrell in the House of Commons, and when he went out into the lobby, the name of Boffin was cried loudly by the policeman at the door, with naturally no result. A special edition of the *Birmingham Post*, limited to six copies, was printed in which Birrell was reported to have been severely heckled by Boffin, after a speech in that city ; a grave correspondence was set up in which the Prime Minister, the Lord Chief Justice, and the Solicitor General consulted each other anxiously about the behaviour of Boffin, and the possibility of taking legal proceedings against him. The character and attributes of Boffin were gradually built up in these ways, and a great deal of newspaper and oral evidence accumulated which left no reasonable doubt of his existence. Finally the whole history of Boffin was set out in a little pamphlet, which Charles Geake wrote, entitled, " The Strange

History of the Rev. Tobias Boffin." This was illustrated by Sir Frank Lockwood with a delightful series of pen-and-ink drawings in the manner then in vogue in the *Strand Magazine* of showing celebrities at different periods of their lives. Lockwood started with a picture of an odious child with oiled ringlets, aged about three, and presented the creature successively at seventeen, twenty-five (with side whiskers) and so on to the age of sixty, when he appears with a forbidding hatchet-like face, the terror of Mr. Birrell. If it is asked why Mr. Birrell was selected to be Boffin's victim, the answer no doubt is that his amiability was beyond question, and that he could be absolutely relied upon to enter into the joke when finally it exploded. The eminent people who joined in this pleasantry showed a remarkable skill in developing the character of Boffin, and it is to be regretted that no copy of Geake's pamphlet appears to have survived.

CHAPTER IV

SOME TROUBLED YEARS

Death of Mrs. Hudson—Difficulties in the Liberal Party—A Disastrous Election—Troubles about Leadership — Troublesome By-Elections — Leaders and Officials—The Anxieties of the Organizer.

THE year 1895 was full of grief and trouble for Robert. Early in January he took his wife, who had been ailing for some weeks, to Bournemouth, and they had not been there for many days before her doctors advised that a serious operation was necessary without delay. She seemed to rally from it, and for a few hours his hopes ran high, then before the day was out she sank and died. "She has passed away and Dorothy and I are left to begin a new and poorer life, God help us," he telegraphed to his brother, and for the time being all that he had hoped for and lived for seemed to be in ruins. "Nothing has come to me in these years," he wrote ten years later, "but has been mingled with sadness," and the shadow lay heavy upon him during all this period of his life. But his own courageous spirit braced him to his work, and he found an unfailing comfort in his daughter and in the warm

friendships which more than ever came to his aid at this time.

It was perhaps a relief to find difficulties accumulating when he got back to Parliament Street. Gladstone had passed from the scene, and his successor, Rosebery, was in deep waters. Only with the greatest difficulty could the rising quarrel between him and his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir William Harcourt, be concealed from the public. The Government, it was evident, could not last out the year and might fall at any moment. Its majority seldom rose above twenty, and often fell below ten. Tactically the situation was nearly as bad as could be. Having decided not to appeal to the country in 1894 when the Lords rejected the Home Rule Bill, it was thrown back—so far as its legislative activities were concerned—upon Temperance Reform and Welsh Disestablishment, subjects which however meritorious, were highly controversial and of very doubtful electioneering value. Though another appeal to the country was clearly within sight, the leaders of the party seemed unable to agree upon what they should fight or the approach they should make to the electors. Lord Rosebery was for gathering up all the grievances of the party in a comprehensive appeal on the subject of the House of Lords, but though he unfurled this banner with a fine flourish, his principal colleagues seemed not to notice it and fought each under his own standard. Moreover, by resigning on a snap

division of no great consequence, the Government had seemed to throw up the sponge and given the initiative to their opponents.

I remember the anxieties of these months at the beginning of 1895 and the strain which they put upon Robert and Tom Ellis. Our Sunday conferences in Cheyne Walk, with Acland contributing what Cabinet secrecy permitted, were prolonged and gloomy. We saw the ruin that lay ahead but no way out of it in the then state of the party and the inextricable tangle of its affairs in Parliament. To Robert it was specially serious because, for the first time since his election as Secretary to the Federation, he was bearing a large part of the responsibility of preparing for a general election ; and these were the cards with which he was expected to win the rubber. He went gallantly ahead and put the best face on it, but when the election was over, and the Tories had come back with a majority of 120 over Liberals and Irish, there was no concealing the magnitude of the disaster. Even the cheerful Ellis can only say that it is " all damnable." Bad had been expected, but this was worse than the worst that he had feared.

Cynlas,
Corwen,
Sunday — 1895.

My dear Robt.

What a disaster ! My heart grieves for dear old Harcourt.[1] I am sorry beyond expression.

[1] Defeated at Derby, re-elected afterwards for North Monmouthshire.

Nothing now seems safe ! To all appearances we have been going on well here—but this will stagger everybody, and do us vast harm.

I hope Geake and yourself are not breaking down in body, though Heaven knows these disasters are enough to break any Liberal's spirits.

Thine ever and ever,
Tom.

It was so evident this time that the organizers could not be blamed that the machine escaped the usual inquest after the defeat of the party in the country. But the situation which followed presented every sort of difficulty to the organizer, who was expected to be equally loyal to all the leaders and preserve the appearance or illusion of unity in the constituencies. Since two of its principal members were not on speaking terms, the " Shadow Cabinet " could not meet or find plausible reason for not meeting. Within a year Lord Rosebery had thrown up the leadership, and the quarrel which for the next eight years was to keep the party on the rack between imperialists and little-Englanders was open and notorious. Though Lord Rosebery had gone, his followers remained in strength and were unwilling that Sir William Harcourt, who was leader of the party in the Commons, should be appointed to succeed him as leader of the entire party in Parliament and the country. No one but Sir William could have been proposed and he could not have been elected

at a party meeting by anything like a unanimous vote, or without a very undesirable display of dissension. This was a matter in which the Federation, as representing the party, was deeply concerned, and the solution came eventually from the Federation which, through its President, Dr. Spence Watson, propounded the view that, in default of an ex-Prime Minister of a Liberal Government, there was no such position as that of Leader of the Liberal party when it was in Opposition, and that no body of Liberals were entitled to make such an appointment. All, therefore, that was necessary on Lord Rosebery's resignation, was that the Liberal peers should elect another leader in the House of Lords, which they proceeded to do by choosing Lord Kimberley. This theory of the leadership tided over the emergency in 1896 and became part of the unwritten constitution of the party in subsequent years.

Tom Ellis and Robert played an active part in the palavers which led to this conclusion, and Ellis delivered his soul in a letter written from Wales a few days after Lord Rosebery's resignation :

Oct. 13, 1896.

Many thanks for your notes. I wish we—Charles [Geake], you and I could have a thoroughly good swear together. That would be a temporary relief.

The disease of the party is deep-seated. Time alone can eradicate it, and Time will take 10 good years of its own self to do the job.

I think I shall come up next Tuesday for a couple of days *but do not let anybody know* except Charles [Geake] and anybody like Tweedmouth or A.M. [Arnold Morley], who can be helpful. I shall only stay a night or two, for I am convinced that my duty is to steer clear of all controversies and confabulations and to content myself with getting the best advice and arriving at the best decision as to what formal and official steps, *if any*, should be taken to get the new position defined.

Harcourt *is* leader of the Party in the Commons, and unless he takes some steps to challenge a vote of confidence, my present feeling is that nothing should be done but possess our souls in patience. Nothing but a good stiff fight in Parliament can do us any good now. But these platitudes are of no use, so I stop.

The situation for the organizers was further complicated by the fact that by-elections were pending and that opinions at head-quarters were deeply divided whether to fight them or let them go by default. Not to fight them would have been evidence, as Ellis said, of nervous prostration; to fight them was to risk heavy defeat, and the transfer, which the Federation wished specially to avoid, of the schism among the leaders to the constituencies. As between the two evils both Ellis and Robert were generally for fighting and "damning the consequences," with a hope perhaps that some particularly damnable consequence might bring home to the more contentious among the leaders the injury which their quarrels were doing to the party.

It is difficult for outsiders to realize the doubts

and anxieties which beset the officials of a party when its chiefs are in a state of dissension. There were long periods between 1896 and 1903 when the Liberal machine seemed to be threatened with a fatal disruption and those who served it were in doubt from month to month whether they would not have to make their choice between one section and another and in great perplexity how to serve both impartially. Robert was never of a disposition to regard his duties as merely those of a paid agent, who was expected to fall in with any views that his paymasters dictated to him. He had strong views of his own for which, if need be, he was prepared to sacrifice his bread and butter, and he expressed them with the greatest freedom and frankness to his official superiors. But he regarded the unity of the party as the special charge of the Federation, and through all the difficulties about leadership which followed the resignation of Lord Rosebery, and the still more threatening troubles which arose out of the South African war, he used his influence steadily and quietly to reconcile the warring factions within the party and to keep the Federation united until the Liberal opportunity came again, as he foresaw it would.

The effort was worth while, as the sequel proved, but for the time being the situation looked very nearly desperate. Neither Rosebery's resignation nor the ingenious solution which the Federation had

propounded for the consequent situation brought peace to the front bench, and two years later (1898) Sir William Harcourt also resigned and took John Morley with him into the wilderness. Campbell-Bannerman stepped into the breach, but before the year was out his position also had become one of great difficulty. For though his eminent predecessors had resigned, they had not departed but remained on the scene as free-lances owing nothing to party discipline, and causing extraordinary embarrassment to each other and to their successor in office. Their quarrel was partly personal and partly political; so far as it was political it was a revival of the old feud between the Palmerstonian and the Manchester Schools, zeal for the Empire on the one side being pitted against peace, retrenchment and reform on the other. Whatever it was, it was exasperating to an organizer trying to rally the party from a recent defeat, and Robert had again and again to report that his stalwarts in the country were perplexed and discouraged and threatening to retire to their tents if the feuds at head-quarters could not be healed.

CHAPTER V

BEHIND THE SCENES 1898—1906

Life-saving in Oakley Street—Friendship with Tom Ellis—Marriage and Death of Ellis—Appointment of Mr. Herbert Gladstone as Chief Whip—The South African War and the Khaki Election—The Presidents of the N.L.F.—Dr. Spence Watson—Mr. Augustine Birrell—Preserving Unity—The Free Trade Campaign—The Triumph of 1906.

I HAVE a vivid little memory of Robert which belongs to one of these years—I think early in 1896, a few months after his wife's death. I dropped in at Oakley Street one afternoon and found him clasping a little wire cage, and apparently in a state of great exhaustion. The cage contained a chameleon, which he had bought, or had given to him, to amuse his little daughter, Dorothy, and he explained to me that he was at his wits' end to keep it fed. The creature would eat nothing but flies, and only those which it caught on the wing with its own peculiar tongue, and since the flies would not come to it, Robert had been endeavouring for the last hour to bring it to the flies which wisely remained on the ceiling or the inaccessible tops of the windows. We took it in turns for the next half hour leaping on to

chairs and tables, and reducing the room to great disorder to the immense amusement of Dorothy, but with total unsuccess in the desired object. The chameleon was much shaken, but nary a fly had it caught, and, as Robert pointed out to me, it was becoming extremely emaciated and had altogether lost its engaging habit of changing colour. I said firmly that, if this went on, he and the chameleon would perish together, and since the case was urgent, strongly advised that he should take it at once in a cab to the Zoo. My advice was taken and a valuable life was saved, but Dorothy, I think, was disappointed.

The friendship of Tom Ellis was Robert's chief consolation during the three years after his wife's death. In 1897 he moved from Oakley Street to No. 13 Dean's Yard—next door to where he had lived in his bachelor days—and the house, being within a stone's throw of the House of Commons, became a place of refuge for Ellis in the dinner hour or any hour that he could snatch from his very conscientious performance of his duties as Chief Whip. For the Chief Whip and the Secretary of the Federation to be on these terms was of course a mutual convenience from the point of view of their respective occupations, but their friendship went far beyond politics and it is not far from the truth to say that they were all in all to each other.

A few letters culled from these years may be left to speak for themselves :

Cynlas,
Corwen.

Dec. 21, 1897.

Dear Robert,

I send you with my most sincere good wishes, "Modern Painters." Its charm to me is that it reveals the beauty of sky, of moving clouds, and of the colours and shadows of the everlasting hills. I think that beauty is a strength to you. That that strength may be yours is the heart's wish of your old friend,

Tom.

House of Commons,
May 25th (undated)

My dear Tom,

Here am I!
consequently
Woe is Me!

I pine for the summer snow-storms of Cynlas, and refuse to be comforted by London rain and wind and slush.

Those days with you were passing pleasant, and I would like you to tell your mother of the intense delight I found in my visit and of the gratitude I shall long entertain to her and to your sisters for their constant kindness.

Excuse a hurried note. The member for M—— has entered and is seated dangerously near to me. Even were it my last Will and Testament that I was writing out, I should scamp and compress it—that I might quickly gather up my hat and coat and flee away.

Ever yours affectionately,
Robert.

38, Ebury Street,
S.W.

Feb. 16, 1898.

My dear Robert,

If you searched this great town through and through, you could not have chosen a birthday gift which would appeal so powerfully to my tenderest thoughts and to my most precious memories.

While I live I shall prize and treasure a book which her hands touched and which kindled to joy and sympathy her pure and beautiful spirit.

For this generous thought of yours, as for all your multitude of kindnesses, I thank you, dearest friend, with all my heart.

Yours ever,

Tom.

Apr. 5, 1898.

My dear Robt.

I hope Lapworth air and surroundings are doing you good. I wish Charles's holiday were longer. He needs it though he deserves it not!

Education Bill.

It is so outrageously and comprehensively bad that one does not know on what vicious points to concentrate.

I think the four points to be hammered at are :—

1. The new "special" grant must be given to all schools, if at all.
2. Every school receiving it must have at least half its governing body selected by the "educational authority."
3. The practical abrogation of the Cowper Temple Clause.

and 4. The degradation and extinction of School Boards.

I do not know when you will summon the General Committee—not I imagine before the 24th. I think it may be more, or rather *additionally*, effective if some county or provincial conference were held. We lose a splendid chance (the best we shall get) if we do not set the heather on fire now. But I admit it will be very difficult—for there is a deplorable apathy in the country. " Kismet," all say.

(Tom)

On August 15, 1897, a brief note from Ellis's home in Wales conveys the news that " your old bachelor friend has become engaged to one of his fair countrywomen, Miss Annie Davies." " She is very, and so is Thine ever, Tom," are all the particulars vouchsafed. The wedding took place in the following June and Robert and Dorothy went down to Wales for it, Dorothy, aged six, acting as bridesmaid. A letter from Tom brims over with gratitude for friendly services at this time and " for all that you have been and are to me." Mrs. Ellis came at once into the circle, and a little later Robert is thanking her for " charming and delightful " letters consoling him for the absence of letters from her husband, whose flow of correspondence had temporarily ceased. Their honeymoon over, Mr. and Mrs. Ellis settled in 9, Cowley Street, Westminster, about two minutes' walk from Dean's Yard, and Robert rejoiced that his old friendship was not to be broken by the marriage of his friend.

This happiness was short-lived. In December Robert went to Monte Carlo, and on the way home in

January he developed typhoid fever, and had a long and serious illness. Towards the end of March he went to Brighton to convalesce, and had not been there many days when he had alarming news of Ellis who had gone with his wife to stay at the Hotel Metropole, Cannes, as Sir John Brunner's guest. On April 2 Sir John wrote to Robert, preparing him for the worst. "Poor Tom is very ill. I am bitterly grieved. He has a temperature of 102° and a racking headache, and the base of the lung is congested." The old tubercular trouble had returned, and this time appears to have attacked brain as well as lung. The case was hopeless from the beginning, and within two days Tom was dead.

Upon no one except the young wife, who was left an expectant mother after a brief ten months of married happiness, did the blow fall more crushingly than upon Robert. Within four years he had lost his wife and his dearest friend, and the future looked black and lonely. He wrestled with himself for many dark hours, and came out of it with a firm resolve to go steadily on. His friendship with Ellis was so well-known that other friends wrote touching and consoling letters. "I hope and believe," wrote Lord Rendel, who in his villa at Cannes had been a second host to the party, "that your courage and faith have lifted you out of the depths. But the chasm will always be there. Your work and life will cease to be what they were. I know no task in life that needs the

help of loyal and strong comradeship more than yours. With him lie buried some ineffaceable episodes of your life, but it is a burial which sanctifies the rest of it. One is always the better for having known and loved a good man, and the more so when he has been a part of one's self at life's best and worst moments."

The death of Tom Ellis was, as Campbell-Bannerman said, "a terrible calamity" for the party, but it was retrieved by the appointment of Mr. Herbert Gladstone to fill the place of Chief Whip. According to tradition it was a step down for an ex-Minister, who had held the office of First Commissioner of Works, to accept the position of Chief Whip in Opposition, but in the condition of the party in 1899 a man of exceptional authority was needed in this place, and in taking it Mr. Gladstone rendered a signal service to his fellow-Liberals. Robert was now brought into intimate association with the new Chief Whip, and a warm friendship which lasted to the end of his life started from this year. The political weather ahead of them proved to be even stormier than they expected, for before the year was out an acute division of opinion about the South African war was added to the other troubles of the party, raising on one side or the other patriotic and conscientious emotions which threatened to make fatal and final dissensions that till then had been mainly about the personalities of the leaders.

The two men worked quietly and persuasively to

keep the mischief within bounds, and the nucleus of the party intact until the storm was over. Both held strong convictions about the questions of the hour, but were content to work patiently for the future when the Liberal opportunity would come again. The immediate business, nevertheless, was grim enough, and in 1900, as in 1895, Robert found himself preparing for a general election which was a lost battle before it began. No Government appealing to the country in the middle of a war could fail to get a large majority, unless the country desired to stop the war which, on this occasion, it certainly did not; and the famous slogan "every vote given to a Liberal is a vote for the Boers" merely embittered a struggle which was to that extent a foregone conclusion. It was undoubtedly a disappointment to Robert that the two general elections since he became principal organizer to the party resulted in large Unionist majorities, but looking back on it in the light of later experience we may wonder not that the Liberal party did badly, but that it did relatively so well in 1900. I have always in my own mind marked it as a high feat of organization and discipline that it fought this losing battle in such good order.

* * * *

The work of the organizer is necessarily behind the scenes, and he succeeds best when he leaves fewest traces of his handiwork. But something of Robert's

life during these years and his intimate relations with his Chiefs and fellow-workers may be recovered from the letters of his friends—unfortunately very few of his own have survived—and especially the letters of successive Presidents of the National Liberal Federation, Dr. Robert Spence Watson, Mr. Birrell and Mr. Acland, which he carefully preserved.

Spence Watson played so large a part in Robert's political life, and was so important a man in his generation, that he claims first place in any memories of old Federation days. He was elected President in 1890 in succession to Sir James Kitson (afterwards Lord Airedale) who had held the office for the previous seven years, and his own reign lasted till 1902. He belonged to a political order which is unfortunately now all but obsolete, but which was immensely important to the Liberal party in these years. This consisted of men who stood outside Parliament but who were the political leaders of their localities and had the purely disinterested object of keeping their fellow-citizens in the right path. Most of them were business or professional men to whom politics were necessarily a side-issue, but they were the mainstay of the local clubs and Associations, and gave generously of their spare time and all the money they could afford for the support of the cause, on which they genuinely believed the welfare and progress of the country to depend. The local newspapers treated them with great deference and reported their speeches

at length, and it was everywhere recognized that they had to be consulted before a candidate was "sent down" or any serious development of policy proposed. The dissent of any one of them was recognized at once as a matter of grave import which might entail the loss of a seat or indeed of several seats. Generally they were Free Churchmen, and when the Nonconformist conscience was aroused it spoke first with their voice, but their emotion was a genuine and honourable one, and many of them had won the respect of their neighbours because they were evidently endeavouring to practise Liberalism in their lives.

The Federation was the special organ of these men, and Spence Watson, who was already a great figure in the north of England, was its natural choice as President when Sir James Kitson retired. He was an ardent Gladstonian and a strong party man, holding with great tenacity the central deposit of Liberal faith, but whenever there was a choice, pulling strongly to the left. If anyone had asked during the twelve years of his Presidency who was the leading Liberal in the country outside Parliament, the answer beyond doubt would have been Spence Watson ; and in these years he had an influence with the rank and file which was only matched by that of the most influential men in Parliament. He was a forcible speaker, and when on the platform dealt faithfully in the old-fashioned full-blooded way with political

opponents. But he was also a most skilful manager of either a public meeting or a committee, and he had a charming and persuasive personality which endeared him to all who worked with him or under him. Outside politics he had a high standing in the legal profession, and was much in demand as an arbitrator in commercial cases. No one could have less resembled the Liberal of caricature—the Bottles of Matthew Arnold or the "Broadbent" of Bernard Shaw—than Spence Watson. He was a man of real culture, and though tenacious of his own views, tolerant and philosophic in his outlook and not in the least prone to any kind of shallow dogmatism.

It was great good fortune for Robert that such a man should have been President during the first seven years that he was Secretary of the N.L.F. The junior could have had no kinder or more considerate senior, and they worked together in perfect amity during what proved to be a testing time both for the party and for the Federation. As the years go on, growing intimacy and affection may be traced in their correspondence.

The older and the younger man exchange views not only about the details of organization but about politics in general, and the characters and dispositions of those who sat in high places. Spence Watson always wants to go farther and faster. He is aflame for all "the causes," as George Russell used to call them, persecuted Armenians, down-trodden Russians,

minorities with a grievance—and is with difficulty restrained from breaking out when timorous Foreign Secretaries fall short of his emotions. He hates the Boer War and writhes under the inevitable compromises on the Education question. Robert to a large extent shared the generous impulses and enthusiasms of this fine old Radical, but it was part of his duties to keep his President from straying too far from the middle path between right and left in these difficult years, and he performed it with unfailing tact and persuasion. While he bursts out in private, the President honestly endeavours to be Presidential on the platform.

Now and again their patience breaks, and especially when the star performers of the party will not do what is expected of them. There is a highly important meeting at Liverpool, but Harcourt will not go, and Rosebery replies frigidly that he has never had anything to do with the Federation except as a subscriber, and does not "think it proper to come forward to take part in its deliberations at this critical moment in the party's fortunes." Asquith is being written to but so far without result. The President is exhausted with the effort and gives vent to his feelings. "Oh, if we could only shove all these great men overboard and have a clear go." Several of Robert's correspondents echo this cry. The party requires men, they say, men with life and ideas, men who will lead and appeal to the imagination of the

public, and where are they? Where especially are the young men coming on to fill the place of the weary and ageing Titans who now control events? There seems never to have been a time in the history of any party when this question was not asked.

Another life-long friendship which came of his work for the Federation was with Mr. Augustine Birrell, who from 1896 had been Chairman of the Liberal Publication Committee and in 1902 was elected President when Dr. Spence Watson resigned. Literary men are supposed to be uneasy bedfellows in politics, but Birrell was a man after Robert's own heart. He brought strong gusts of fresh air into the Office, and stirred all the dry bones into life. With a great distaste for the jargon of politics and a highly original way of expressing his own views, he was yet a robust party man with an old-fashioned loyalty to leaders and principles and a readiness to go anywhere and do anything for the cause. Robert had the greatest affection for him and delighted in the literary companionship which their friendship brought him. Both were ardent Johnsonians, and if anyone could have done Boswell to Birrell, it would have been Robert.

Under Birrell's Presidency the N.L.F. was called upon to play a leading part in the struggle to repel the attack on Free Trade and bring a Liberal Government back to power. The great triumph of 1906 throws its glamour backward over these years, and in

retrospect we see only the Liberal tide rising and gaining volume. Actually, for those who lived in them and took part in the work, they were a period of exhausting labour and baffling uncertainty. There were many weeks in 1904 and 1905 when the downfall of Mr. Balfour's Government seemed a matter of days or even hours, but time after time it miraculously survived and went blandly on. To the organizer it was a nerve-racking business ; he had always to be ready and was perpetually being balked by false starts. The Publication Department piled up pamphlets and leaflets which though good for one moment might be useless for the next ; the Federation and the Free Trade Union planned culminating demonstrations which might end in fizzle and bathos if the crisis was for ever postponed, and all the time the groans of candidates at the cost and toil of the intolerably prolonged campaign were heard in the Office. Nor in these days did the result seem by any means certain. Though the party was united on the Free Trade issue and the great majority were on fire about Education, the Irish question was still a great perplexity, and the intentions of Lord Rosebery about that and sundry other matters were both obscure and disturbing, and so remained to the last moment. It was in fact Lord Rosebery's Bodmin speech challenging Campbell-Bannerman's deliverances on Home Rule which in the end encouraged Mr. Balfour to resign and throw on the Liberal party the onus of

forming a Government at a moment when it seemed once more to be deeply divided.

Robert's part in all this, though unceasing, was characteristically modest. He never appeared if he could help it, and adjured his press friends, as they loved him, to keep his name out of the papers. But we knew him to be at work all the time, helping Gladstone with the placing of candidates and the adjustments between Liberal and Labour; keeping touch with his local Liberals, and curbing their impatience; and gently steering eminent and self-assertive people in the way of peace. I saw much of him in these days, and when unable to see him communicated with him constantly through his brother-in-law, Charles Geake, who spent half his day as assistant editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, and the other half in the service of the Liberal Publication Department. Geake was amazingly skilful as a propagandist; he knew all the awkward things that politicians had said in the past and could make the wisest look foolish in the deadly parallel which brought their past into judgment against them. With F. C. Gould as cartoonist and myself lending a hand, the *Westminster Gazette* and the Liberal Publication Department were in close alliance in these days, and it was a great advantage to me as editor of a London paper to be in this constant touch with the organization which stood for average Liberal opinion and especially Liberal opinion in the country. Over and over again when

all the sections were railing at the "smoother," Robert encouraged me to persevere in that unpopular part, and assured me that his "good men in the country" would support any protest against the setting up of rival tabernacles by one section or another, the ostracisms and counter-ostracisms, the persistence in fine shades of difference about the Irish question, which were thwarting the unanimous desire of the rank and file to go forward on plain Liberal and Radical lines.

Birrell took his duties as President most seriously, and not less so because he brought a saving humour to bear on most situations. But there were times when even that willing servant jibbed at the hard driving of his Federation task-master. "I am at the service of your organization," he writes to Robert, "though, as you know, organization is neither my forte nor my foible, and to be abused by C. is the price one has to pay for devotion to party. . . . I don't mind going to Rugby on the day you name. Only one post to-day brought me five invitations—one from the Y.M.C.A. of Northampton, one from the Free Churches of Newhaven, a third from the Liberal Association of some place in Wales, a fourth from New College Chapel, Hampstead, a fifth from Toynbee Hall. The Welsh gentleman asked my fee!! I have declined them all in writing *worse* than this." "You did well to escape from London and the assaults of the ——, and take our crafty Ulysses with you to the

seashore," he writes in September, 1904, when Liberal hopes of the break up of Mr. Balfour's Government had been dashed by the Duke of Devonshire's consent to remain in the Government after Lord George Hamilton and Mr. Ritchie had resigned. "By the side of the ocean it is easy to preserve a sense of the true proportion of things. It is a marvellous embroglio all the same. Five newspapers have in as many telegrams besought my diagnosis. As in especial duty bound I have preserved my wisdom for the Bristol organs.[1] So on Monday in the West, the sun will for once arise. The Duke of D. is disappointing; perhaps he had the lumbago, in which case alone can I forgive him."

No letter is without its personal touch. "My ears itch for gossip. The grand style palls," says Birrell, and though Robert's response has not survived, we may be sure that it was adequate. Robert is an expert in foreign travel and Birrell begs to be advised about a holiday. "Abroad it must be. But August abroad is not so easy as September, and Switzerland, though delightful, is apt to be crowded and noisy. You have ideas. Impart them. I shouldn't mind being within hail of you and Dorothy, but I don't insist on self-sacrifice. I want *Comfort* in all essentials but can dispense with grandeur. I don't mind people at meals, provided I can dispense with them at other times. I want glorious scenery and shady walks. Not

[1] Mr. Birrell was candidate for North Bristol.

so many clergy or Noncon. Ministers. I like being at 4,000 ft. and can't abide ————————. Will go far for a good place, but dislike days and nights in the train. Think of us and advise." Robert no doubt was equal to the problem, but it would be a crime to reveal its solution.

Other letters gravely debate a proposition made to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman by an ingenious person who asks only for a modest remuneration, and handed on by Sir Henry to Birrell and Robert. This is that on the eve of the approaching election the country shall be flooded with large and small rubber balloons representing respectively the big Free Trade and the small Protectionist loaf, which "inflated with one of the lighter gases" and "soaring high above the house-tops" will, the author of the idea believes, have a supremely valuable and far-reaching effect upon the mind and imagination of the country. The cost, he says, would be small and the balloons could be "retailed at a penny each, if thought advisable." Unfortunately in his letters he has throughout spelt balloons as "baloons" with an unhappy ambiguity in the writing of the letter 'l'—upon which Birrell remarks, "I suppose he means 'balloons,' for baboons are not novelties in elections." Accompanied by this comment, the idea was submitted to the Executive Committee of the N.L.F. "with profound respect"—so Birrell reported to Campbell-Bannerman, but it evidently did not go forward.

I am indebted to Mr. Frank Barter, who in later years succeeded Robert as Secretary of the N.L.F., for certain impressions of him during the twenty-five years that they worked together. He notes especially his equable temper and self-control in all circumstances. He damped hopes when they were rising too high and raised them when they were falling too low, was never depressed by adversity or over-elated by success. In 1906 he expected a handsome working majority and a strong Liberal Government, but was doubtful whether the tremendous triumph which followed might not in the end be a source of weakness. What is most remembered by his fellow-workers is his generous appreciation of help and service. To Mr. Barter at the end of the year 1919 he sent his own gold watch, inscribed " To Frank Barter who for twenty-five years has been my devoted friend and colleague," and with it the accompanying letter :

13, Dean's Yard,
Westminster.
Dec. 29, 1919.

My dear Frank Barter,

I have a fancy to ask your acceptance of my gold watch in commemoration of our long and happy association in common work. You have been a good friend to me all through those 25 years, and never have you shown me greater kindness and consideration than during the years of war when the burden of Federation work fell wholly on your shoulders.

I am not ungrateful, and I would like you to be reminded of my regard every time you pull the watch out of your pocket.

When it will reach you I can't say, because I am having an inscription put upon it, and even little jobs take time in these days.

Always yours affectionately,
Robert A. Hudson.

CHAPTER VI

INTERLUDES

Not a True Professional—A Sea-side Home—Friendship with Charles Gatty—And Father O'Connor—Days at Felixstowe—A Bundle of Letters—The Kai Lung Club—A Visit to Rome—Days in the Country—The Return to the Office.

I FIND one of his friends saying in a letter to Robert about the year 1900, "you are not really a politician, you are far too human ever to be a true professional at that business." The implied judgment on politicians seems from the context to have been a hasty generalization from recent disclosures about American bosses, and by that standard Robert certainly deserved the compliment that his friend supposed himself to be paying him. He was up to no machinations behind the scenes; he did not think his opponents to be either knaves or fools, and, what in those days was even more meritorious, he lived in charity with all sections of his own party. But, most of all, he had abundant interests outside politics. He loved music, read all sorts of books, was an ardent Stevensonian and Johnsonian, a leading member of the Johnson Club

and the Omar Khayyam Club[1], and through them was thrown into the society of all sorts of literary folk. He played golf with great ardour and passably well, and fished when he could. For a man of fixed occupation he had travelled widely and on the slightest provocation was ready for a sea-voyage or a run into Italy or a mild flutter at Monte Carlo. Though officially one of the keepers of the Nonconformist conscience and in warm sympathy with its claims to religious liberty, he was by conviction a strong Churchman, and would walk three miles rather than miss his Sunday early Communion. With all his other business on his hands he found time to be Treasurer of Westminster Hospital and took his duties most seriously, and for many years acted in the same capacity, and with the same seriousness, for the Westminster Spiritual Aid Fund. He was also a magistrate both in London and Suffolk, and for several years a regular and very helpful Prison visitor.

In 1901 he became possessed of a charming seaside house, Beach House, Felixstowe, and there for the next fourteen years he spent some of his happiest

[1] He was elected to the Omar Khayyam Club in 1905, was Vice-President in 1908 and President in 1909-10. An old member of the club, Mr. John Henderson, writes, "High as the reputation of the club is for its after-dinner speaking, Hudson from the first took his place among our best. One speech in particular, in which he proposed 'The Guests,' is well remembered and spoken of by all who heard it as one of the most brilliantly witty we ever had. His principal theme was the Honorary Secretary's salary, on which his fun was simply irresistible. Ever since, the subject has been one of the two or three standing jokes of the club. For the rest, I have just the happy feeling of having enjoyed every one of the innumerable occasions on which I was with him, either then or elsewhere."

days with his daughter Dorothy, and many intimate friends whom he invited to stay with him. It was a long, low, white house with a lawn sloping down to the sea and trees on either side of the lawn. He was there nearly always in the summer, and for as many week-ends during the rest of the year as politics permitted; and the sea air and change of scene enabled him, in spite of his frail constitution, to survive the twelve-hours a day bursts of work at the Office which were his portion in critical times. It was an ideal place for a child, and he was never happier than with Dorothy and the troop of children friends who gathered on the beach and made Beach House the centre of their seaside life.

Robert always needed at least one intimate man friend, and after Tom Ellis, Charles Gatty filled the place. The "inimitable," the "fugitive," the "mysterious," the "unpinnable" C.T.G., he calls him at various times, and warns friends who are invited to meet him at Beach House that it is highly doubtful whether he will appear. Gatty was the real "original" of the circle and he was literally and figuratively all over the place. Quite early in life he had been converted to Roman Catholicism and was ardent in the faith, but he had also plunged into politics and contested a constituency as a Liberal, held an official appointment which he seems to have taken very lightly, rushed over to Ireland in the days of the Home Rule strife and spent a year in

developing Irish industries. He was a fine musician and learned hymnologist ; his edition of the " Arundel Hymns " is still, I believe, the standard edition, and a pamphlet that he wrote on *Parsifal* did much to make that great work understood in the early days. He was a man full of humour and strange lore and always abounding in zeal about something, though at the moment it might not be easy to ascertain what. He would " blow in " suddenly in a state of great excitement about something which he wished you to understand was the most important thing in the world, but which was by no means easy to understand. I remember him as tall and handsome, but with a curiously weather-beaten look for so studious a man. Of his attractiveness there could be no doubt, and he was in great demand among his friends, who included dukes, ecclesiastics, musicians, authors and politicians of both camps. George Wyndham was one of his intimates and, through Gatty, Robert got to know Wyndham, whom he greatly liked and admired.

But the friend for whom he always held himself most indebted to Gatty was Father J. O'Connor, whom Gatty brought from the south of Ireland to stay at Beach House in August, 1901. From that day began a friendship which lasted without a cloud to the end. For all these years they corresponded with each other at short intervals, and the Father's annual visit to Felixstowe—the " reunion of Christ-

endom" as Robert used to call it—was one of the things that they most looked forward to in the year. Father O'Connor has set down his memories of their first meeting and the many others that followed:

When Charles Gatty chanced on a good thing he was resistlessly moved to share his luck with a pal, so he commandeered me for Beach House from the south of Ireland in glorious August weather 1901. I sat in the white drawing-room inhaling the sea-scented air and trying to forget the grime of the three hundred miles of railway, wondering if the room would take on my dingy feeling or if it would wash my fancy.

At the psychological moment of this inward debate in came Robert from the lawn, all in light garments and on his bronzed face such a smile of welcome, blithe and frank as must be with me till I die. Perhaps I do not often cause such smiles, or perhaps few men ever could smile as Robert did. My heart was his for ever and a day, and not once in five and twenty years did he depart from that ideal friendliness.

That year was the children's year at Felixstowe, and the sands below Beach House were the children's paradise. We were made free of the commonwealth at once, Robert knowing them all by name, Ramsays and Whites and cripples, with Reginald Blomfield flying box-kites for them and inventing parachutes with a windlass that he clamped on to the "ribs" of the anti-erosion scheme letting out two miles of white string plainly visible against the incredible blue of the East Coast. His parachute was a Japanese umbrella with the handle and stick removed, and the kite-string threaded through the hub. A slight impulse sent it along the string, the wind blew it open and it went faster and faster towards the kite until it knocked hard on something up there which snapped the umbrella closed and let it slide down again. This was

called " sending messages." I mention this at length because it seemed to fill Robert's whole mind from day to day. He revelled in it for and with " the child," his only one, Dorothy. Her friends were his, and he shared all her thrills. I remember one luncheon being glorified with " Sylvia is coming to-day," and Dorothy's long-drawn roar of " O-o-o-h *Daddy!* " as 'twere any sucking dove.

She went out on a wagonette-party with a crowd of small persons, and at eight they were still away. Robert was more and more perturbed as the minutes wore on, and food was of no interest to him until she came in radiant. When she went for the forenoon dip with her friends, I was told off to swim to and fro between them and the deep, and even so, her anxious Daddy would have to drop his sometimes urgent correspondence to stand at the end of the lawn when he could see us all for himself.

After days like those, there were nights of the gods when Robert gave way to his passion for Robert Louis Stevenson, or Charles Gatty read the " Tight Boots " or played Parsifal, with Peter the Peke, giving way quite dreadfully at the agony of Amfortas. The Wallet of Kai Lung was discovered and the Kai Lung Club initiated. I suppose Robert was the Prime Instigator—then Ernest, then Gatty, then this totally insignificant and unworthy person, next George Wyndham, Lord Rosebery, Augustine Birrell—and so on. I think that is the strict chronological order.

In other years, though Robert that first time looked so grieved at parting from us, history repeated itself quite happily. Stella Benson, aged eight, was writing fairy-stories which contained real lyrics. We loved with a kind of worship this self-possessed baby with the still eyes, mature of soul. At lunch one day with us the talk turned on queer pets—of course it was Charles Gatty who knew the man with a tame pig! But Stella added to our store : " Last month I saw a man

walking in the park with a cat and a goat." "Do you mean they followed him up and down?" "Yes, and I saw them turn with him several times."

Barbara Lutyens, not quite four years old, used to amuse Dorothy and us all by flinging herself into the surf, and chancing that the elders should retrieve her.

It did me good to see how Robert answered with the utmost simplicity and without any levity all questions put by "the child." Never was a company of merry bachelors so at home with young folk, and never was I so impressed with the homage we owe to them whose angels always do behold the face of the Father.

We all sailed the Deben in the boat of Jack Frost, who had been cabin-boy to Fitzgerald and Posh, and Robert's footnotes to Omar Khayyam made the visit to Woodbridge a literary pilgrimage. Coming home from Bawdsey Point we bought what lobsters luck might send. It awed me much to find they had to be tied with string, and black lobster is still associated in my dream-factory with orange sunsets waning slow—as the first lobster coincided with an amazing sunset to which we uttered all the hymns and incantations we could think of. I note all these minutiæ because Robert was in each and every, and first and last.

A bundle of letters in tune with the foregoing memories have survived from this time :—

Beach House,
Felixstowe, Monday.

Dear Lad,

How good it all was! That you enjoyed it I know; and that I enjoyed it you must have seen and felt.

Come again; come as often as you can, whether it be here

or at Dean's Yard. Dorothy and I went up to the Lodge on Friday evening, and presented civil messages from you to Felix Cobbold. He said he would gladly have seen more of you, and that he hoped you would never visit Felixstowe without looking him up. He then took us to the Vine house, and sent us home bearing 2 whopping bunches of grapes for "Grannie."

A spell of wild weather is on us; heavy driving rain, heavy seas and great gales. Walter Ramsay brought us a mammoth lobster from Bawdsey for our supper last night. The Manchester J.P. [Charles Rowley] and I fell on it right valiantly, but we deplored your absence, and had to pass on a considerable portion of the creature to the kitchen. You can estimate its size from this statement! We washed it down with an Imperial pint of Champagne, and Rowley declared afterwards as he smoked the evening cigar that we had attained the Simple Life, and that he liked it!

Ever your devoted,
R.

The "Wallet of Kai Lung" by Ernest Bramah,[1] first published in 1900, is the cleverest and the best sustained of all the satires in the supposed Chinese mandarin style. For many years it was a household word to Robert and his friends, and spread outwards from them to a select group of politicians including Lord Rosebery, who placed it almost on the same pedestal as "The Diary of a Nobody" among modern classics. The members of the Kai Lung Club talked and wrote to each other in the mandarin style:

[1] Reissued in "The Travellers' Library" (Jonathan Capes).

13, Dean's Yard,
Westminster,
Nov. 30 : midnight.

Dear and Reverend Father,

In the month of many Yellow Vapours, and at a time of unendurable annoyance in affairs of business undertaking, the delicate handwork of a writer of your inspired intelligence was more pleasing to this person than the sound of many gongs of the finest and most polished brass.

This one has long promised himself the refined but undeserved enjoyment of intruding himself afresh on your notice by the medium of folded writings such as the carriers of letters for an insignificant reward will convey swiftly over many leagues of country to the remote Province which your presence converts into the centre of Enlightenment in our Land. Well has it been said, " Where the reverend and illuminating one resides, there is no need to spend one's taels on the purchase of candles or paraffin."

For a person, however, of my vapid intellect and ineffable dullness, this manner of language threatens to absorb so considerable a portion of my remaining years that the letter if persisted in on these symmetrical lines may come to be finished by the unmentionable ones who are designated as my Executors.

Wherefore, dear friend, I pass to the phraseology of the sixpenny telegram, and I ask " How are you ? " Not too happy, I am afraid, with your jail ? If the Governor and the doctor are difficult to deal with, what of the governed and the doctored ? Are they better to deal with, and is there recompense in the task ?

Father O'Connor had by this time moved to Yorkshire and among his duties was that of jail chaplain.

He was now oftener in London, and came to Dean's Yard as well as Beach House. In 1903 Robert saw *Everyman* performed for the first time by Mr. William Poel's Company in St. George's Hall, Langham Place, and wrote breathlessly that the "Padre" simply must come from wherever he was to see this wonderful thing. He came and together they went not once but many times. In return the Padre took him to the Oratory on a Sunday morning of which he recalls a characteristic little incident. "I remember," he writes, "how like King Herod I was towards a fractious infant howling in our ears at the cnoicest moment of the music; but the dear man beside me selected two new pennies and purchased peace from the venomous imp—to me a much needed lesson in behaviour in Church."

Old Mrs. Hudson, Robert's mother, seems to have been a little disturbed by this intimacy with a Papist, but she was quickly reassured, and to her also the Padre became an intimate friend. Robert's staunch Anglicanism survived a visit to Rome, where his friend seems to have opened all doors for him including that of the Holy Father. He writes on his return:

13, Dean's Yard,
Westminster, S.W.
Jan. 19th, 1913.

My dear Padre,

Day after day I have put off writing to you because I have

wanted leisure to write a letter of proper dissension. But I don't get the leisure, and I will delay no longer in sending you this little New Year gift from Dorothy and me.

I don't know if I have already said on a p. card from Rome that we were received by the Holy Father. This rosary we took with us and the dear kind lovable old man blessed it, and now we offer it to a faithful son of His Church.

Merry del Val was gracious to us in the extreme. We had ¾'s of an hour with him one Sunday morning and since we got back he has sent us a perfect autographed photograph of the Holy Father, which you will see when next you are here. I must see about getting it very nicely framed.

Prior is a trump. He dined with us one evening. He took us down and round and all about one of the Catacombs with great thoroughness. We liked him much.

Cronin of the English College was also uncommon kind. We took a great liking to him. One Stanley (Bishop of Emmaus), a brother-in-law of Lady St. Helier, was another ecclesiastic who put himself about to do things for us. You were quite right. Heretics are well looked after.

But Heaven was very sparing of sunshine, and very prodigal of rain while we were in Rome, and we got no decent weather until we migrated to Monte Carlo. There we had 10 days of blissful warmth and blue skies, and managed to escape without losing more than 2 or 3 pounds in the wicked Casino.

Now we are seeking to settle down to work. But persistent lumbago, which these east winds don't mend, makes me inclined for my domestic fireside and disinclined for my office chair. Fare thee well, and grateful thanks, dear lad, for your substantial share in making our visit to Rome so full of interest.

Ever yours,

Robt.

The intimacy between these two friends extended to the deepest things in the lives of both. " Round about 1903-4," writes Father O'Connor, " Robert and I crossed posts so often that we both remarked it. On a January morning in 1904, I had got to the Commemoration of the Dead at Mass when quite abruptly came the suggestion to remember Robert's wife. I can swear that nothing led up to it. I was quite startled, and at once after breakfast wrote to him about it. By return of post came a touching letter to say that that was the day years before when she had left him ' with one startled look.' " " I did not forget you (indeed, dear lad, I never do) as I made my petitions at Holy Communion this morning at 8 o'clock," wrote Robert some four years later, acknowledging a letter on his forty-fourth birthday in which also his friend had spoken of his wife.

Vivid glimpses of days by the sea, holidays at Lapworth, rambles in the New Forest come into Robert's letters to his friend:—

Summer has gone and autumn is very much with us (he writes from Felixstowe at the end of September). Gales blow and the sea roars and a fire is a cheerful sight most days. Great blobs of foam, " spindrift " I think the sea-folk call it, float in the wind up on to the lawn. Two nights ago the gale demolished the canvas tent and the tide carried off some of the wooden huts from the shore. But it is all amazingly healthful and our appetites are simply indelicate.

On May 17, [1902] I fled to the New Forest for rest. With me came Dorothy and my unmarried sister, Edith. Excellent quarters at a distinctly civilized inn at Lyndhurst. The Forest at the door, more or less, and opposite an Anglican Church, with the most wonderful frescoes of the Ten Virgins painted by Leighton, an East Window by Morris, and a gem of a monument by Flaxman.

Far more wonderful, however, are the aisles in the Forest. The beeches are too much for words. The green of the young leaves, the sun shining through them on a brown carpet of last autumn's leaves ; clumps of vivid moss, trees here and there of wild crab in blossom (Nothing so beautiful to my mind as the blossom of the apple)—all this is just terrific. 100,000 acres, planted temp. William I. We found a beech, 36 feet round the trunk ; symmetrical, perfect, having verily fulfilled itself, as few living things do. Sun poured thro', birds sang aloft in the branches, rabbits and even field mice came out as soon as we became motionless. Nothing was wanting but a gallant troop of knights and pages and falconers and such like breaking through the brushwood. Enough, however.

With a fresh sheet of paper let me get to other topics.

Do lend me your Lavignac. Some day it shall be returned to you.

Charles's pamphlet on *Parsifal* I know. He sent me a copy when he brought it out. Where he is I know not. Wandering round among R. C. Seminaries, someone told me. I have told him to regard himself as booked for Beach House Aug. 18 to Sep. 3. Pray threaten him with pains and penalties if he doesn't come. You speak with an authority which *I* lack. We must have him.

The darling, the grace of God, is well again, and grows in stature and in dearness. She sends you her love and is eager to see you at Felixstowe and show you her shrubs and plants which she and Sylvia amused themselves with planting in the

measles-convalescence period last month. We shall find 'em all dead I expect when we descend on the place in August.

George Wyndham is *great*. But, between ourselves, and contrary to Charles's belief, he will never fill the very highest office in the state. "'Cos why?" He is of far too fine gold for it. Prime Ministers must have plenty of hard alloy in their composition. Pure gold is too delicate for the wear.

More of this in August. For the moment, *bed*.

We got back last night [June 2, 1903] after a real good Whitsuntide in the beautiful country of Arden.

Lapworth never looked more lovely. I went a-trout-fishing on Monday, to a brook which my brother Frank had acquired, and on which he has squandered £32 since Christmas in the making of weirs which are swept away regularly by every successive flood. The trees, the meadows, the field-flowers, the music of the birds and of the brook—not a house in sight and only a ploughman and his team within hail—all too glorious for words! I got 10 trout, but put 8 back to grow a little bigger. Mother and Dorothy ate the other 2 and enjoyed 'em.

Now and again Robert confides to his friend his dreariness of spirit when the summons comes at Felixstowe or at Lapworth or Rome or Monte Carlo, "back to London, back to the office, back to organizing and agitating." The year 1902, with Mr. Balfour's Education Bill on the stocks, was specially full of affliction:

I am swamped in Education Bill agitatory business (he writes on October 14), I feel that the Bill will pass but that the Government wish they had never seen the cover of it.

To-morrow I have 600 worthies from all parts of England and Wales who assemble here under my auspices in the Caxton Hall, Westminster, to denounce the thing, lock, stock and barrel. I begin with office appointments at 10.15, a Committee at 11, another at 12. A luncheon for 20 people at 1; the big meeting at 2.30; tea for 600 at 5; and a dinner party at 8. I shall be very limp when I get my slippers on in the evening.

CHAPTER VII

MORE INTERLUDES

"Gold Stick" at King Edward's Coronation—More Friendships—Sir Oliver Lodge—The Westminster Chapter—Canon Beeching—Edward Clodd—Thomas Hardy—W. S. Gilbert—Lady St. Helier—Lord Charles Beresford—Holidays and Travels Abroad—The Monte Carlo Fortnight.

THE year 1902 was not all education and agitation; it was also the year of King Edward's Coronation—the deferred Coronation on August 9th—and for that Robert was commanded as a "gold stick"—by the Earl Marshal, the Duke of Norfolk. He had gone at the beginning of the month to the Wagner Festival at Bayreuth, and seems to have cut his return rather fine:

Aug. 8. 1902. 11 p.m. Back from Bayreuth. *Parsifal* at Bayreuth beyond words. Have to present myself in Court dress at the House of Lords for breakfast with the Dook in seven hours. Abbey at 6.30 a.m., there, so far as the Officers are concerned, until 3, I believe.

I myself looked down on the scene from the Triforium that day and I still keep in memory a glimpse

of Robert in Court dress shepherding the great to their appointed place. He loved these occasions and, I imagine, enjoyed himself hugely in spite of the nine hour day.

The "Sylvia" whose name appears frequently in the letters of this time was Miss Sylvia Thompson, the daughter of Mr. Isaac Thompson of Liverpool, who came to live at Dean's Yard to be a companion to Dorothy and help with the housekeeping, six years after the death of Robert's first wife. She remained for ten years, and Robert could never speak too warmly of what he and his daughter owed to her. The only shadow which lay across his path, he says on one occasion, is the awful possibility that Sylvia might be recalled by her parents. He was spared that until Dorothy was old enough to take up her own place, and, in the meantime, Miss Thompson relieved him of the cares of housekeeping and enabled him to feel that Dorothy was in safe hands when he was away from home. That Robert "lived very neatly," as one of his friends said, that he was a delightful host and gave charming little dinners, was the verdict of all who visited Dean's Yard in these years.

It was through Miss Thompson that he came to know Sir Oliver and Lady Lodge, who had been next door neighbours to her father in Liverpool. The Lodges were frequent visitors both at Dean's Yard and at Felixstowe, and Robert and Sir Oliver played golf together almost every day that they were at

Felixstowe. To catch Sir Oliver whenever he came to London, bring him to Dean's Yard, take him to a theatre, persuade him to speak at the Johnson Club or the Omar Khayyam Club, was an aim which Robert zealously pursued for a great many years. When at Felixstowe Sir Oliver delighted the children with certain simple but entrancing scientific experiments, but as a rule he and Robert talked neither science nor spooks, but pursued the even course of an intimate homely friendship which was an equal pleasure to both men. Robert does, however, venture a congratulation on Lodge's Presidential address to the British Association at Birmingham in 1913, and quotes the tribute of another friend to the " fine and courageous passages " in which, speaking before a scientific audience, he had testified to the continuity of consciousness after death.

Living in Dean's Yard, Robert became, as one of his friends said, a sort of " extra unofficial member " of the Westminster Chapter. That was a side of his life of which his political friends knew little, but for twenty years and more it meant a great deal to him. There was constant coming and going between Little Cloisters and Dean's Yard ; his treasurership of the Westminster Spiritual Aid Fund brought him into the life of the Abbey ; several of the Canons, and especially E. H. Pearce, the sub-Dean, now Bishop of Worcester, were among his most intimate friends. When a Liberal Government was in power and even

at other times, he was a sort of liaison officer between the Westminster Canons and No. 10 Downing Street in the matter of ecclesiastical promotion. The results of his efforts in this direction were likely, as he warned his friends, to be disappointing. There were many in the field, the wire-pullers were numerous, and his political chiefs—and not least a certain Lord Chancellor—held very decided views of their own which made pressure beyond a point undesirable. Still when vacancies are in prospect ecclesiastics feel it to be a duty which they owe to the Church to be early in the field, not of course on their own behalf, but on behalf of friends whose claims and qualifications seem to them irresistible and unaccountably overlooked. Robert was always friendly and forthcoming on these occasions, and Mr. Asquith in after years handsomely acknowledged that the advice which had come to him through the Hudson-Westminster channel had been sound and useful.

The Chapter at this time was a microcosm of the different schools in the Church, the old school and the new school, the high and the broad, with Canons Barnes and Henson representing the Modernists, Beeching standing for scholarship and literature, and Barnett the "philanthropist" bringing the Sidney Webbs and all manner of other queer people into the seclusion of Little Cloister. The Deans were rather aloof, but the others were intimate and lively, and their letters abound in genial comment on Abbey

politics. Beeching, whose early death in 1919 was a great blow to Robert, was a special intimate ; Robert stayed with him in his country home at Burford, and lent him Beach House for him and his wife to take their children to the seaside. Beeching had many literary friends whom he invited Robert to meet ; one note undated, but probably belonging to the year 1908, asks him to dine and make the acquaintance of a "young poet and his bride," who turned out to be Mr. and Mrs. Compton Mackenzie. A growing interest in books and points of literary scholarship may be traced in these years. Robert, who was becoming more and more a book collector and learned in first editions, puts conundrums requiring, it might appear, an alarming amount of research, but his friends are undaunted and pour out their learning.

In 1904 he edited and saw through the press the book which his father had all but finished at the time of his death in 1902, "Memorials of a Warwickshire Parish."[1] This represented the life work of an enthusiastic student and remains an admirable example of researches into parish history.

A few *obiter dicta* may be culled from some of the letters of Robert's clerical friends. "The use of the House of Laymen in the economy of Providence," writes one of them about the year 1909, "is to exhibit to the nation the faults of clergymen in an aggravated form." "I hear our friend X. outdid himself yester-

[1] By R. Hudson, Methuen & Co.

day blessing Dives and cursing Lazarus. The poor choir boys went to ask the Precentor which was right, the Bible or X." Speaking of a meeting (I think) of the Bible Society : " Asquith was admirable, so in a different way Meyer, but it was pathetic to hear speeches rehearsing the older Bibles in the wrong order with obviously no notion of what they were. The utterance of the English clergy was disgraceful." " These clever young theorists are, as Plato said, just like puppies, who enjoy themselves in the use of their teeth without heed of what they destroy."

Another intimate friend, but quite definitely not of the ecclesiastical type, was Edward Clodd, the eminent writer and student of anthropology. This friendship began when Clodd, who was more than twenty years Robert's senior, was still pursuing his bread-winning vocation of secretary to the London Joint-Stock Bank, and was fostered by their common membership of the Omar-Khayyam Club. It grew in intimacy in spite of the difference in their ages and their opinions about first and last things, and there is a warm glow of affection in the older man's addresses to the younger. " You are one of the rare company," he writes at the beginning of February, 1916, " towards whom one's love is as that of David for Jonathan, and concerning whom there is the abiding regret that meetings for handshake and ' sweet counsel ' are so rare." (Clodd aged 76 had by this time retired from his bank and moved out of London to Aldeburgh.) "I

turn me to the table which tells no flattering tale—that of the ' expectation of life ' in Whitaker's Almanack. I read therein that I am good for 5.81 years. On the basis of our meeting four times a year—that's a high average—we shall meet a score times before I pay my score. Ponder this—I can't honestly say with the Apostle ' wherefore comfort one another with these words '—and see how far the old man with the scythe can be cheated over that average. I hear that you propose to honour me by coming to my Lecture and Clement [Shorter] tells me in a letter this morning that we meet as W's guests at lunch on the 18th. Item take off and from the score : 19 left." The older man as it turned out, was more successful in cheating the reaper than the younger and died at the age of eighty-nine while this book was passing through the press, but Robert was always careful to keep his friendships in repair, and in this case he needed no reminder.

A few passages may be culled from a bundle of letters to and from Clodd ranging over many years. Robert writes to condole with his friend on the death of George Meredith in 1909, and draws the reply: " Yes, there will be no more quaffing of the wine of life from the rare ripe vintage of Box Hill. For me an enriching friendship of a quarter of a century comes to an end, but death can't take away the memory of it." A week later, in reply to an invitation to lunch, Clodd says that he cannot come because he has lunching

with him Thomas Hardy, Professor Bury, Flinders Petrie and "Golden Bough" Frazer,—surely a unique collection of learned and literary lions. The two men exchange books and in return for a copy of the "Memorials of a Warwickshire Parish" Clodd lends a booklet of his own, "Question, if a man die, shall he live again?" which would probably not have been read with pleasure by Robert's ecclesiastical friends. On the subject of "honours" Clodd is slightly quizzical and expresses polite surprise at learning that the "vitality" of a distinguished friend whom they had in common had been "distinctly raised" by the conferment of a knighthood. On the subject of knights in general, he refers Robert to Gibbon, Chapter LVIII, the passage beginning "as the Champion of God and the Ladies," but he warms a little in 1918 when Robert gets his G.B.E.:

> My verry parfit gentil Knight, Grand Cross of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, if you go on like this, adding star to star, each differing from each in glory, bearing (not in suffering) cross upon cross and ever widening your bands, you'll look, as the late Sir Robert Hart told me he looked when he spread his orders across his breast and back, like a Christmas tree. Well, however you look, thus adorned, there will beat between the symbols of your good service to the state, the same large heart which holds a host of friends.

Robert was determined that all his friends should dine and speak either at the Omar Khayyam Club or

the Johnson Club, and many letters show the pains he was at to overcome their scruples and objections. No persuasion prevails with Harry Dickens to speak about his father; he will do it occasionally for the Boz Club and the Dickens Fellowship but nowhere else—for reasons good which clearly had to be respected. A long correspondence brings W. S. Gilbert up to the mark, and on a certain evening he is down to be the guest of honour on the right hand of the Chairman and to make the speech of the evening. Unhappily he either misread Robert's writing or entered the date wrongly in his diary, for the evening came and went and there was no guest of honour and no speech—a terrible affair which led to heart-searching remorse and explanations.

Gilbert was held in high honour by the Hudson family, including Charles Geake, Robert's brother-in-law, who seemed to know his works by heart. Robert and Dorothy visited him and his wife at Grim's Dyke, Harrow Weald, as well as at 90, Eaton Square, and he had a pleasant habit of addressing Robert as "Duke." An undated letter from him bears the address "Heaven 7th. House, No. 84," and proceeds "the sceptics and agnostics are all wrong. There *is* a Heaven and Hell, so look out for squalls. I'm in the same holy flat with Lucrezia Borgia and Richard III (they carry on *awfully*). He has some very piquant anecdotes about Lady Anne. It's all bosh about those two princes. An angel's blessing on Dorothy. I'm going to bring

her under the notice of the boss who runs this show." The letter winds up with a lively pen drawing of Gilbert (by himself), as an angel playing a harp as he swims through the sky with his feet trailing after him.

He too was one of the distinguished people whose vitality was raised by the conferment of an honour. I learnt accidentally early in 1907—either from Geake or from Robert—that it would give him pleasure to be made a knight, and was so struck by this modest assessment of his "claims," that I promised on the spot to put it to the Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman. I did put it, and I have no doubt that Robert put it also, and found as I expected, that C.B. caught at the idea, being only too pleased, as Prime Ministers generally are, to find any well-known figure—outside the official groove—to season his list. Gilbert, I am sure, could have had a baronetcy or a peerage for the asking, if he had so desired, but the knighthood, which came in June, 1907, seemed to give him complete satisfaction. Honours are a frequent subject of chaff in their subsequent correspondence. "I am glad to hear you are breaking the bank," he writes to Robert who is taking a March holiday at Monte Carlo in 1910, "but don't contribute your gains in the form of supply to your party. I know your instinct would be to do this and so help them out of their difficulty [the suspended Budget of 1909] but you would only get a peerage and then be abolished." A month later when the question of a

creation of peers was becoming serious he writes again: "You don't happen to want a steady-going peer with no principles worth mentioning who would go into any lobby on the shortest notice?" This pleasant intercourse was only broken by Gilbert's tragic death in 1911. He had but a few days before made a witty speech at the Johnson Club, on Robert's instigation, and was to have dined at Dean's Yard the day after he was drowned while bathing, and endeavouring to save the life of a fellow-bather in the bathing-pool in his own grounds.

Thomas Hardy, too, came with his wife to Dean's Yard, and Robert visited him at Dorcester. He was an almost unqualified admirer both of the novels and the poems and a most careful student of the geography of Hardy's Wessex.

Robert seems always to have been a welcome guest in the enemy's camp, and among his principal friends in these years was Lady St. Helier, with whom he and Dorothy dined, lunched and stayed at short intervals over many years. Certain letters show them cheerfully sparring about politics. "I told you," said the lady in November, 1909, "that the Lords were going to throw out the Bill [i.e., the famous Budget of that year] and now I tell you that the Conservative party are going to have a majority—only small. You say you are 'easy in your mind.' I suppose that means that you are satisfied at the prospect, which, indeed, I believe you are. What a holiday you will have!"

"Do you think we could possibly meet without quarrelling?" she writes two months later when the election was half way through and it had become evident that her vaticination was going wrong. "But come and dine with me either Wednesday or Thursday. Thursday would be the better day because by that time the bitterness of death will be passed. Shall we be alone, or shall I ask a sympathetic Liberal and a sympathetic Conservative?"

It was probably through Lady St. Helier that he got to know Lord Charles Beresford, with whom also and his wife he struck up a warm friendship. This breezy seaman—he hated to be called "breezy" but everyone insisted on the epithet—considered that he had a mission to convince Liberal politicians that the Navy was going to ruin in the hands of his brother Admiral, the famous "Jackie" Fisher; and he invited Robert as his guest to visit the fleet in Scottish waters that the truth might be hammered into him. Except that Robert went and greatly enjoyed himself, the result is not recorded. The curtain is lifted at a certain moment in 1908 to show Lord Charles in a high state of expectation at Mr. McKenna's coming to the Admiralty and confiding his hopes to Robert that at last the truth will come out, and the proper measure be taken of his rival and opponent. In this he miscalculated, for the new First Lord worked hand in hand with Fisher, and for the next four years the reconstruction of the Navy went steadily forward in

accordance with the Fisher Scheme. But both these Admirals were in their respective ways highly accomplished and vigorous propagandists, and Fisher's letters to me while I was editing the *Westminster Gazette* were certainly as breezy and vehement as Beresford's letters to Robert. I remember asking another distinguished Admiral what really was the state of the Navy in these days of warfare between the two schools, and his answer was briefly: "Pandemonium."

A word may be added about the holidays and travels abroad which are a constant theme of Robert's correspondence.

A fortnight or three weeks at Monte Carlo in December and January was an almost regular feature of Robert's life, and from 1903 onwards his daughter Dorothy went with him. It was a subject of much chaff in these years that the Liberal party was to be found in strength at this notorious place in the winter months, and Robert himself had the serious responsibility of having set this fashion. But the Monte Carlo holiday was not at all what the scoffers suggested. The key to it was the little railway to La Turbie which offers a door of escape from the monotonous flat walking on the shore that is the routine of so many Riviera places, and makes it possible to start walking on the high level in some of the most delectable mountain scenery in Europe. It was the rule of all of us who followed this fashion to take the 10.10

train to La Turbie in the mornings and spend the daylight hours on Mont Agel, or the hills above Eze, coming down in the afternoon to Roquebrune, Mentone or Beaulieu, as the case might be, and thence taking train or tram back to Monte Carlo. We either took our lunch with us or lunched at some little restaurant which we found on our road. When the Mont Agel plateau was turned into a golf course—golf for goats or gods, as someone said—Robert spent much of his time there, but in the earlier years walking was the rule, and I treasure the memory of many delightful hours that my wife and I spent in his company, or with the brothers McKenna or Charles Russell, on these winter rambles. I do not pretend that Robert or any of us had any scruples about a mild flutter at the Casino, but it was our rule never to go near the place till after dark, and whoever broke it was severely frowned upon.

Robert was at Berisal in the summer of 1903, and there he amused himself making a collection of Swiss wild flowers which gave him considerable trouble and great enjoyment. In 1907 he was at Arolla doing a certain amount of mild climbing, and in the following year he went with his daughter on a cruise along the Dalmatian coast to Venice in the course of which he first met Mr. (afterwards Sir) Harry Dickens, and W. S. Gilbert and his wife, all of them afterwards lifelong friends. In 1910 he and his daughter went on another cruise, this time to the northern capitals—

which was a complete success, but in the following year (1911) he had a serious misfortune which threw him out of action for several months. He was motoring south in company with Lady St. Helier after visiting her at Strathpeffer and seems to have slept in a damp bed in a hotel on the way. On reaching Birnam in Perthshire, he went down with pneumonia, and lay ill there till November when he was moved to Felixstowe. Fortunately his daughter was with him, but the illness was a serious one, and he had to spend two months at Madeira before returning to work.

In the summer of 1913 he was on the west coat of Ireland with Vaughan Nash and H. W. Massingham, both of them among his intimate friends in later years. Vaughan Nash, with his self-suppressing ways and quiet judgment of men and things gathered from a long experience as Secretary to Prime Ministers, was in some ways the antithesis of Massingham with his vehement opinions and forked-lightning talk. But Robert was greatly attached to both of them, and when Massingham was on the war-path it was always a good plan to put Robert on to him. But these summer outings were nearly at an end. There followed the journey to Rome in the winter of 1913, already recorded, and then in August 1914 came the great crash changing everything and making an end of these happy interludes.

One more friend of these years may be mentioned before this chapter is closed and that is Charles

Rowley, the founder of the Ancoats Brotherhood a Manchester, an admirable and indefatigable man whom Acland introduced to Robert, and who often came to Dean's Yard. Rowley commandeered us all in turn to lecture at Ancoats, and Robert lectured there on Stevenson one November afternoon in 1901. His lecture was afterwards reprinted as a pamphlet and it shows the studious care which Robert gave to a favourite author. It is exact in its facts and chronology and shows evidence on every page of close reading. The passages chosen for quotation illustrate the essayist, the romancer, the poet and the letter-writer with careful impartiality, but with a special appreciation of Stevenson's appeal to children of all ages. One passage may be quoted here :

> Stevenson has given us the pass-key to many a pleasant retreat from the tedious and the commonplace. He can transport you from office, shop or factory, as it were upon a magic carpet, to the incomparable Treasure Island : you shall scan the stained and fascinating chart, and thrill when the voice of the look-out on the *Hispaniola* proclaims "Land ho!" —and Manchester and London and the rest will for a blessed moment be blotted out. Or that same carpet will take you at command to the storm-swept Pavilion in the Links, with its green Venetians, its grim occupants, its story of stress and adventure (compressed in unequalled measure into a bare hundred pages). Or, seize another slender volume and you will thread the streets of London with Prince Florizel for guide, and visit the Suicide Club, or sup with the New Dynamiter, in pleasing uncertainty as to when you should smile and when

you shouldn't. Anon, you will be transported aboard the *Covenant*, see the fight in the round-house, be wrecked on the Ross of Mull, find shelter in Cluny's Cage, and reach at last the haven which is entitled, " I come into my kingdom." Or, when you are tired of the North Country, you will sail the Pacific on the *Flying Scud*, and make acquaintance with Loudon Dodd and Jim Pinkerton and many another whom you rejoice to know, but you wouldn't for the world bring home to dinner. Or you will visit the Swiss mountain-valley where are Will and his peaceful mill, Marjory and the fat young man, and that Dim Stranger who at last conducts Will upon his travels. And so, if time sufficed, one might lengthen indefinitely the possibilities which attach to that simple square of Stevenson carpet. Or you will take his Essays, and in their enchantment you will forget his Novels, or you will read his Verses and find yourself once more a child dwelling among children. Or, to come to an end, you shall read his Letters, and live in the intimate society of the Man himself.

If one tried to construct from one's inner consciousness the figure of a typical political organizer of the twentieth century the result would, I think, be something as unlike Robert as the mind could well conceive. He, with his literary and bookish tastes, his Churchmanship, his liking for good company wherever he found it, his pleasure in travel and the countryside, his sensitiveness, his warm and carefully selected attachments, has all the qualities which should be disqualifications in the perfect machine man. And certainly he does often groan in spirit when the untowardness of public affairs cuts across his cherished schemes and imposes its veto on

something that would have been far preferable to sitting in Parliament Street. There was a delightful journey to the West Indies, planned to the last item of the itinerary for the winter of 1910, which had to be thrown up at the last moment for the much less desirable occupation of preparing for a General Election. There was the perpetual and irritating curtailment of pleasant tours abroad or lingerings by the sea at Beach House because Governments would hold autumn sessions or summon Parliament early in January. Robert was nevertheless exceedingly dutiful about his duties to the Liberal party, and it was just this discursiveness and many-sidedness which made him valuable. There were a great many better machine men, but very few who excelled him in managing men, keeping the peace between the quarrelsome, encouraging the faithful and steadying the waverers—all very important things in the history of the Liberal party between 1906 and 1914.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GREAT TRIUMPH AND AFTER

The Resignation of Mr. Balfour, December 1905—The Question of Tactics—A Serious Hitch—Mr. Arthur Acland's Intervention—The Triumph of 1906—Many Acknowledgments—Relations with the Liberal Agents—Mr. Acland as President of the N.L.F.—Sir William Angus and Sir John Brunner—The Two Elections of 1910—Agitation and Tumult—The Coming of War.

THE two previous chapters have rambled over many years, but I must return now to the political part of the story and take it up in its proper order.

When at length the Balfour Government made its exit on December 4th, 1905, the proper course for the Liberal leaders was far from clear. Should they form a Government before the election or compel Mr. Balfour to resume and dissolve? The one man who had the power of deciding, Campbell-Bannerman, had no doubts, and from the beginning he was resolved on taking office the first moment that opportunity offered. But for several days he kept his own counsel, and the argument went to and fro behind the scenes, the older men being generally for

the bolder, and the younger men for the more prudent course. The latter pointed out that Disraeli had refused in the similar circumstances of 1873 to relieve Mr. Gladstone and been thoroughly justified by the result at the subsequent election; also that Lord Salisbury had accepted office in 1885, and by so doing spoilt whatever chance he might have had in the election of that year. Robert urged the great importance of getting the election quickly and feared procrastination if Mr. Balfour resumed office, but his more intimate friends were strongly against acceptance on the ground that the attack on the Government was the chief part of their electioneering, and that it might lose its point and edge if the Government to be attacked were no longer on the scene.

All these questions of tactics proved to be of trifling importance in the sequel. The country had determined to make an end of the Unionist Government and cared little about any manœuvring for position by either attack or defence. Far more important and anxious was the situation created by the demand put forward by Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Haldane, during the week of Cabinet-making, that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman should go to the House of Lords. This did really seem to threaten a revival of the old schism between Liberal imperialists and other Liberals at the most inconvenient moment, and no one at the time knew how far that might go, if once it started again. The three days in which

this matter was in doubt was a time of deep anxiety, and once more the organizer saw his work being frustrated by the unaccountable behaviour of his leaders. I have told the story of these days in detail in the Life of Campbell-Bannerman and will not repeat it here, but I remember vividly the cheerful evening which a little group of us spent with Robert at Dean's Yard on Monday, December 11th, when it was all over, and his enormous relief at not having to report to his good men in the country that there was another schism at head-quarters.

Yet one of his intimates had come out of it bruised and battered and, in a way, that was rather a special concern of Robert's and mine. Acland in that week of Cabinet-making had rendered a considerable service to the leaders of the party who seemed at the moment to be warmly appreciative, for he had been asked to hold himself in readiness for a summons from Campbell-Bannerman. This he quite reasonably interpreted as meaning that he would be invited to join the Government. But neither summons nor invitation nor any other communication reached him, and he had the mortification of remaining in readiness at his house, as the etiquette of the business required, from the Thursday evening to the Sunday morning, when he learnt from the newspapers that the Cabinet was complete. How and why it happened neither Robert nor I were ever able clearly to discover. According to one version a Treasury messenger had lost his way

in a fog; according to another Acland himself had spoken about his health in a way which was taken to mean that he would refuse office if it were offered him. Anyhow the door was closed, and we who had invoked his assistance seemed to have exposed him to the kind of rebuff which he of all men least deserved. Robert and I put our heads together about it, and after the election I went to C.B. who made such amends as were possible. But there were certain men whose merits and services C.B. was rather slow to recognize, and I came away with the impression that he had never intended to invite Acland to join his Government.

The organizer could sleep with a light heart after the election of January 1906. All that he had ventured to predict was far surpassed by the result, and the days on which the amazing results came pouring in were the happiest in his professional life. This time, if there was any account to settle, it was only with certain candidates, who, having been persuaded to take up forlorn hopes, found themselves suddenly and unexpectedly, and to their great embarrassment, elected members of Parliament.

A handsome acknowledgment for services rendered before and at the election came from the Committee of the N.L.F. who included the following passage in the Report presented at their meeting in May 1906 :—

Your Committee, and indeed the whole party, are indebted

to Mr. Hudson for the manner in which he discharges his difficult and responsible duties. He enters this month [May] on the 25th year of his service with the National Liberal Federation. In that period a long succession of Executive Committees have come to know him and appreciate his personal worth and devoted labours. Since 1882 he has served under three Liberal Prime Ministers, has worked with five Liberal Chief Whips, has gone through the ordeal of six General Elections, and throughout has made himself countless friends and no enemies. No small share of the credit of the great triumph of the General Election is due to the skilful way in which Mr. Hudson has directed the working of our Federation. Your Committee wish thus publicly to put on record their gratitude for his long and faithful services, and their hope that for many years to come he will continue to fill the chief executive office in the national organization of our party."

I find an allusion to a "little dinner" to Robert, —the date and place of it I am unable to trace, but it was somewhere about this time—which the Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, "insisted on attending," and at which he proposed Robert's health in affectionate terms.

Birrell said lightly to Robert one day in 1904: "If you go on like this, you will be getting knighted for your services to the party." So actually it turned out to be when the new Government produced its first Honours List in June 1906. The Prime Minister himself put his name into the list, and gave him not the slightest inkling of it until the whole list had been approved by the King and was on its way

to the Press. He had therefore practically no option but to accept. His feelings were rather mixed about it, but if anything gave him pleasure, it was the unanimous opinion within the Office, which was afterwards shared by the organizers and agents in the country, that their profession gained in status by the distinction conferred on their chief. That view was held also by the Conservative organizers, who were generous in expressing their pleasure.

Congratulations poured in from M.P.s and acquaintances regardless of their political opinions, but there were heart-searchings within the circle of intimates. Acland, who was heir to the ancient baronetcy to which he afterwards succeeded, considered titles to be a hereditary affliction which it was folly and defection from Liberal and democratic principles for the born commoner to bring down upon himself. He had accordingly endeavoured to put all his younger friends under a pledge of total abstinence when "honours" were being distributed, and he was seriously disturbed at what he thought to be Robert's back-sliding. Moreover, he was now President designate of the Federation in succession to Birrell and he took the view that he ought to have been consulted by both the Prime Minister and the Secretary before the one offered and the other accepted a favour from the Government which might be thought to compromise the sturdy independence on which that body specially prided itself. He wrote with

some asperity that he had read with surprise the announcement in the papers and declared himself "a natural enemy to honours in a democratic country." Robert replied with spirit and he appears to have carried the war into the enemy's camp by suggesting that Acland would no doubt desire that the designation "Rt. Hon." should be omitted in any future letters that might be addressed to him, since this also clearly offended against the rule against honours in a democratic country. This did not mend matters, and Acland absented himself from the next Committee of the Federation (at which Robert received warm and sincere congratulations), on the ground, as he frankly said, that if present he would have been obliged to play a part "with an element of hypocrisy in it which would have been unpleasant to you and me alike." Robert took no offence and a week later the correspondence winds up upon a more genial note and Acland asks indulgence as "an old curmudgeon who chooses to differ from a large number of Liberals in this matter."

Other old friends indulged in mild chaff, Charles Gatty describing how "the fearful news" was broken to him and how he immediately sent out for "some deep-edged paper" on which to write his condolences. In the end Birrell summed up the argument:

As for your particular joy or sorrow I have no doubt it will please (1) the *Agents*—(2) the *Federation Delegates*—(3) *your*

good Mother—all mothers like to see their Weans respected *above the lave* (but you are no Scot, and perhaps don't know what the *lave* means) and probably (4) your *daughter*. Had your wife lived she must have been added to the list—and a very important list it is. It is very hard to *refuse* personal honours. Personally I am not enamoured of Knighthood. It adds to your *Hotel* bills and increases the minima of your tips. "Sir Robert" can hardly sidle through life as did "Mr. Hudson." I always admired the simple majesty of your door-plate "*Mr.* Hudson"—a mixture of the *Dentist* and the *King*, the stern simplicity of both these functionaries. Anyhow it makes no difference *to me*, and as soon as the d——d Bill is through we will have a good crack over a bottle.

Thine,
A.B.

Birrell was right about his "important" list. The knighthood did give very sincere pleasure to his mother, who looked at it quite simply and saw in it only a well-merited recognition of a much-loved son. It was also taken as a great compliment by the agents, who at their annual breakfast at the Plymouth meeting of the Federation in the following year (June 1907) gave Robert a rousing reception. A few passages from his speech on this occasion may be recorded:

It was very agreeable on those occasions to find themselves complimented, as they always were. Almost were they persuaded that they were very fine fellows! But the correction usually came when the Liberal agent returned to his own constituency. Then he saw the reverse of the medal, and he was

apt to wish that he would meet with the same consideration individually as he received on these occasions collectively. He could comfort himself, however, by remembering the saying of a saint of the third century. That saint told them that people praised them quite as recklessly as they blamed, and with as little reason in the one case as the other. It was, he admitted, just conceivable, and only just conceivable, that the victory of the great general election of 1906 was not wholly, solely or entirely due to the Liberal agents. But if that be granted as a concession to their critics, they must at least put in this plea, that the great defeats of 1895 and 1900 were not due to them either. The Liberal agent did his best. He was like the students of the Scottish University when they cultivated literature on a little oatmeal, for it might be said of the Liberal agents that they maintained the organization on a little subscription list. They were modest men. They did not imagine themselves indispensable. But they thought the policy of retrenchment, so necessary in national finance, might be carried too far in local organizations. He dropped this hint in all friendliness, and in the hope that in the hands of Mr. Whiteley and Mr. Acland [the new President of the N.L.F.] it might bear fruit.

The July 1906 number of the agents' journal *The Liberal Agent*, brimmed over with approval and satisfaction at the honour done to the Federation Secretary. It drew a letter from Dr. Spence Watson who summed up Robert's qualifications as " patience, tact, gentleness, firmness, prescience, and above all, the power of saying the thing which had to be said when most disagreeable, and yet of so saying it that offence would not be taken." These acknowledgments meant more

to Robert than almost any others that he received at this time. Throughout his official life his complete understanding with the agents in the country, reciprocated by their trust in him, was one of the great sources of his strength behind the scenes. He urged that they should be better paid and enjoy an orderly method of retirement and pension when they were too old to work, and seldom spoke on a political platform or at any of the meetings of the Federation without pleading their cause. A speech that he made at Newcastle when he was the guest of the evening at a House Dinner of the Liberal Club (November 19th, 1910) may be taken as a sample of many on this theme:

I am here as a representative of Liberal organization and of Liberal agents. If you go for a sea-voyage you will find a number of charming gold-braided officers, who walk the bridge, navigate the ship, and determine its course—always with the hidden assistance of certain rather grimy engineers down below. It is on behalf of those hidden workers of the Liberal party that I thank you for the honour done to me this evening.

I am always proud to be numbered among the Liberal agents. I have seen them at close quarters for many years. They are staunch men, hard-worked, under-paid, and not over-considered. In days of adversity they are the first to suffer, and their fortune is not much better in days of prosperity. If the party is hopelessly beaten, there are too often those who will say "Why not save money by dispensing with an agent?"

And if the party is triumphant, with a majority of a few thousand to the good, someone will come forward and suggest

that the position is so secure that they can get on all right without indulging in the extravagance of an agent!

I speak that which I know, but I will add that in this, as in some other respects, the North Country as a whole shows more wisdom, or more charity, than the South.

In 1912, when he was laid up for many weeks with the serious illness already recorded, agents from all over the country sent anxious messages of inquiry and sympathy, and one of his first acts on returning to duty was to send a letter to their journal:

Will you allow me, through the friendly medium of *The Liberal Agent*, to express my thanks to the many members of our fraternity who have sent me their sympathy and their good wishes during my recent illness.

While they have been at work mastering the details and expounding the benefits of "An Act to provide for Insurance against Loss of Health and for the Prevention and cure of Sickness," I have lain in bed, where health and sickness became matters of vivid personal interest to me. I shudder when I reflect on the exceptional facilities I have enjoyed during all this gloomy time for learning the views which are held on this subject by the medical and nursing professions!

Now, back at "No. 42," I would like, with your permission, to send warm thanks to all my colleagues from whom cheerful greetings have reached me in the past five months. I hope that if any one of them should ever find himself in the damp bed of a country inn, he will have the sense (which I lacked) to get out of it!

Yours sincerely,
ROBERT A. HUDSON.

March 16th, 1912.

The election of 1906 brought many changes among the politicians with whom Robert was chiefly associated. Herbert Gladstone, with whom as Chief Whip he had worked intimately in the last years of the Opposition, became Home Secretary, and Mr. George Whiteley (afterwards Lord Marchamley) took his place. The popular "Bobby Spencer," wit, fop, and soundest of Radicals, who had thrilled the House of Commons by observing reflectively in the course of a speech on a Land Bill that he was "not an agricultural labourer," was now raised to the peerage as Viscount Althorp, and became Lord Chamberlain. Most of the old Whips were moved up, but the new team included several men of marked ability and character, such as Mr. J. A. Pease (now Lord Gainford), and Mr. F. Freeman Thomas (now Lord Willingdon and Governor General of Canada), and the Master of Elibank, who subsequently succeeded Mr. Whiteley as Chief Whip. With most of these he was intimately associated in the subsequent years, but the change which affected him most at the moment was the succession of Acland as President of the Federation in the place of Birrell, who had been obliged to resign that position on being re-elected to Parliament and entering the Cabinet as President of the Board of Education. The Knight and the Rt. Honourable now buried their hatchets, and nothing could have pleased Robert better than that one old friend should succeed another as the official chief with whom he was most brought in contact.

But between the two he was driven rather hard during the next year. The main object for the first session of the new Government was Education, and it caused bitter recrimination in the country. It was Acland's subject, and it was Birrell's subject—since he was in charge of the hotly debated Bill—and it had perforce to be Robert's subject. Acland knew every corner and cranny of it, and day by day he primed the Federation and the Liberal Publication Department with material for leaflets, drafts of resolutions, schemes of propaganda requiring greater and greater activity. In his zeal he forgot his own ill-health, and was in despair when others showed signs of flagging energy or a disposition to seek repose while the battle raged. Still more his spirit misgave him when he detected signs of wavering or compromise, efforts to conciliate opposition at the cost of principle, deals with the Church party to save a Bill which would no longer be worth saving. Grateful as he was for this support, there were moments when the ex-President who was in charge of the Bill desired the President who was in a less responsible position to put a little water into his wine, and it was Robert's part to keep his two old friends in line with each other.

When Arthur Acland resigned the Presidency in 1908 after a two years' term, his place was taken by Sir William Angus, a leading Northumbrian, eminent as a business man in Newcastle, who for several years had been President of the Newcastle Liberal and

Radical Association. He was of the type that the Federation greatly liked, a strong Nonconformist and sincerely religious man, very influential and highly respected in his own locality, eloquent and forcible on the platform. A photograph of him surrounded by a group of Newcastle Liberals, including ladies in the costume of the period, shows his vigorous character and upstanding figure. All went smoothly in his reign, which was a great time for the Liberal party, the time of the Budget conflict, the Parliament Act and the two elections in 1910. The Federation played up manfully, producing resolutions at all critical moments, pouring out literature from its Publication Department, organizing public meetings in the country. Robert was in his element, and he was able to report to anxious inquirers at head-quarters that there was but one mind among the good men in the country and that was for a fight to a finish on the House of Lords and Home Rule issues. During these years he became specially intimate with Mr. Asquith, whom he encouraged in his resolve to go to a second election in 1910 in spite of the doubts and fears of a good many old electioneering hands, who thought that the country would resent being plunged into this turmoil twice within twelve months. But Robert knew his good men, and was never in doubt that the Liberal party must stand or fall on these issues.

Sir William Angus reigned three years and was succeeded by Sir John Brunner, in politics a stalwart

of the old school, but with a parliamentary career behind him, and a national reputation as one of the founders of a great firm. Sir John was a through and through Liberal, and in Parliament had ranked as one of the "viri pietate graves" who stand aloof from office but have a great influence over private members and are always consulted by their leaders when the parliamentary weather is unsettled. When Brunner shook his head, the Whips began to run about and it was recognized that the leaders were in danger of touching, perhaps unconsciously and unintentionally, one of those sensitive nerve centres that are just below the surface in the Liberal physiology. He was no orator and spoke seldom, but he carried weight, whether speaking or silent, and his support was invaluable when the party was in difficulties or when it was doing something that the best people thought extreme or disreputable. He was a man after the Federation's own heart and the ideal President, so soon as his retirement from Parliament rendered him eligible for the position. He and Robert worked together with the old intimacy and affection that had bound him to so many of his Presidents, and to Robert, I think, his chief attractiveness was that he abounded in benevolence and kindness of heart and was above all things a good man.

The three years that followed (1911-1914) were all tumult and bitterness, Ulster threatening rebellion, suffragettes breaking windows and burning churches,

the comity of parties broken by recrimination which passed from the public to the private life. The organizer found his work extraordinarily difficult, and the war of pen and tongue, which is his proper sphere, threatened to give place to that of guns and fists. It was, as Robert found, very little use to ask distinguished men to address meetings in the country if none of them could be guaranteed a peaceful hearing, and the most elaborate precautions could not preclude an irruption of suffragettes. He pegged away and did his best, and the Publication Department under the indefatigable Geake once more poured out a stream of pamphlets and leaflets, fighting the prejudices against Lloyd George's insurance scheme, instructing the public on the House of Lords question, the Irish question and the Welsh Disestablishment question which once more had become a fighting issue in Parliament. But the politics of these years kindled passions that were beyond the control of organizers and, when all the issues were still in doubt, a still greater suddenly presented itself and swept them all into limbo.

CHAPTER IX

THE WAR AND THE RED CROSS

The Coming of War—A Visit to Devonshire House—The Red Cross Society—Its Functions in War—Amalgamation with the Order of St. John—Hudson as Chairman of Joint War Finance Committee—His Many Duties—*The Times* Fund—The Christie Sales—A Tribute from *The Times*—Honours and Acknowledgments.

IN July 1914 Robert had made his usual arrangements for spending August and the first half of September at Felixstowe. He was at the Prime Minister's Downing Street Garden Party on July 23, attended the last meeting of the N.L.F. Executive on the 24th and did actually spend the next two days at Felixstowe, where his household had gone before him. Then on the 28th he returned post-haste to London. War was now in sight ; the storm warning had gone out, and the Government and the party found themselves plunged into the gravest of all their crises.

This time there was nothing for the political organizer to do. The crisis rushed to its conclusion before soundings could be taken or the politicians in the country be consulted. Robert was never in any doubt

that they would follow where the Prime Minister and Cabinet led, and his own mind was clear that, if war came, it would be a war of grim necessity. On August 4, it was merely a question of what a political organizer could do to help the common cause, and in common with its opponents and rivals the Federation at once placed itself at the disposal of the Government to rally the public and aid recruiting. For the next fortnight Robert busied himself with the conversion of his machine for these purposes, but with other organizations rapidly growing up and political boundaries becoming effaced, this effort quickly reached its limit. The vast majority of men and women preferred to work not as former Liberals or Conservatives, but as plain citizens mingling with one another, regardless of their politics, for the national cause.

Robert from the beginning felt the need of some active personal service which would take him out of his political groove. The notion of sitting in Parliament Street, and just keeping his organization alive with the aid of a few elders, while all the young men went to the war, was only to be thought of to be rejected. Being fifty years of age, he was too old for military service, but he was alert and youthful in mind and had experience and ability which would have been wasted in most of the occupations reserved for the elderly at home. Above all, in virtue of his long service as Treasurer of a Hospital, the work of the

Red Cross appealed to him, and his touch with the medical world helped him to realize its urgent necessity. So at the suggestion of Sir Frederick Treves he presented himself at Devonshire House, where the British Red Cross Society then had its head-quarters, on the morning of August 19th and asked simply whether he could be of any use. That he was the type of man they most needed, that they would take him and use him every day and all day—Sundays included—was the answer. So for the whole period of the war and for the greater part of the year following, Robert's work was laid down for him. Except for short periods when he was ill or when his doctors absolutely required him to rest, he persisted in it without pause or holiday from year to year, bearing the heaviest responsibility, and using up his own strength in a manner which undoubtedly shortened his life.

What is the Red Cross Society and why should such a Society be needed when there is a regular Army Medical Service, and it is the acknowledged duty of the Government to provide for the sick and wounded in war? The question was often asked during the war, but the answer may have been forgotten by now, and it may be well to say a word about it before going farther. When men are sick or wounded, there is always something not provided under official regulations which, though not absolutely necessary, will greatly ease their lot. This

the public is only too anxious to provide, and the Red Cross Society becomes in war the organized means of conveying its gifts and expressing its sympathy. This is its function in all wars, even the smallest, but in a great war it becomes an essential auxiliary to the regular medical service. It helps that service to draw on the civil population for additional doctors, nurses and ambulance men, to obtain additional stores, and above all to expand its hospital accommodation. In the Great War all hard and fast lines between the two services were obliterated. The Red Cross provided Voluntary Aid Hospitals to which the wounded were passed on from military first-line hospitals ; in addition to providing stores for its own hospitals it supplemented stores and provided luxuries for the military hospitals. It was able to do this with greater speed and profusion than would have been possible to a Government department working under regulations. Its Voluntary Aid Detachments included not only nurses and ambulance drivers and stretcher-bearers, but typists, cooks, workers in canteens and internment camps, and other volunteers of all sorts. It gave its help all over the field of war, in Italy, Serbia, Rumania, Palestine, Egypt, Russia, as well as in France and at home ; and the speed with which it organized and mobilized these special efforts was of the utmost value in emergencies.

When Robert went to Devonshire House in August

1914, the chief part of the organization had still to be built up. There were two Societies then in the field, the ancient and illustrious Order of St. John of Jerusalem with its head-quarters in Clerkenwell, as well as the Red Cross; and both were issuing appeals to the public for what was practically the same work. This caused great confusion and overlapping and threatened to spoil the work of both. Before many weeks it became evident that to join up these two Societies in one appeal and to pool their resources under one control was an imperative necessity, and during the autumn and winter a joint-working agreement was arrived at between them. Lord Northcliffe characteristically forced the issue by saying bluntly that he would not publish in *The Times* or any of his newspapers, advertisements from both of them appealing to the public for the same purposes. This no doubt quickened the pace, but the need of unity was by this time so evident that the difficulties were bound to be surmounted, and on October 20th, 1914, the two Societies were for all practical purposes amalgamated in a Joint War Committee of twenty-four members, twelve being appointed by each.

Robert was a member of this Committee, but more important still he was appointed Chairman of the Joint War Finance Committee. This Committee took its duties very seriously and met generally once a week, but the main burden and responsibility fell

of necessity on the Chairman. For it was the special virtue of the Red Cross that its decisions should be prompt and generous, and that it should even at some risk fill the gaps left by the slower and more formal official procedure. This meant trusting individuals and especially trusting the Chairman of the Finance Committee, who had all the time to keep his eye on the money that was coming in, and yet not be so rigid in his control of what was going out as to defeat the main object in view. Robert, in the judgment of all who worked with him, steered his way with great skill between these two extremes, but his guiding thought was that the public would give anything to ease the lot of the sick and wounded, provided it was assured that its money was being wisely spent. A pettifogging financier might have held up the work while he required proofs and guarantees which could not be forthcoming, and a reckless or extravagant one might have destroyed public confidence in the administration. Robert was firm that the funds should not be diverted from their proper object of relieving the sick and wounded, and he put his foot down against numerous claimants who were only distantly related to that object, but he realized that in war even the financier must walk in faith, and thought it far better that some mistakes should be made than that urgent work should be held up for fear of making them. One condition, however, was paramount—that every penny should be

accounted for with the strictest and most business-like precision.

After a few weeks the administrative part of the work was moved from Devonshire House to 83, Pall Mall—an annexe of the Royal Automobile Club lent to the Society by that club—and there Robert worked till the end of the war. The heads of departments working under the same roof constituted day by day an executive in permanent session, with the Chairman of the Joint War Committee, Sir Arthur Stanley, presiding over all. Robert's work threw him into specially intimate association with Sir William Garstin, the Director of Stores, and for most of the day to day disbursements discussions between him and Garstin, and afterwards between both of them and the Chairman, were the ordinary procedure. But this was only part of the day's work in Pall Mall. He was in constant correspondence with the Commissioners, Sir Courtauld Thomson and others, who were working abroad; there were callers innumerable and Robert made a rule that his door should be open to the largest number. Never in all his political life had he been so accessible or so patient in listening to the wise and the unwise, and the miscellaneous company which brings its schemes and inventions, its dreams and its fads, to the source from which a great fund is dispensed. Thanks to long practice, he had remarkable skill in disposing of his visitors without giving them offence, but this part of his work added a good deal to the

exhaustion which he felt too often at the end of the day.

But the Chairman of the Finance Committee was not only concerned with the administration of the fund; he had also to see that the money came in. In this he and his Committee had from the beginning the active assistance of Lord Northcliffe, who threw himself into the work of rousing the public with characteristic energy, and placed *The Times* unreservedly at the disposal of the Red Cross. It was a great and generous idea, which was abundantly justified in the end, but it encountered some criticism at the outset. It was said that not one newspaper but all the newspapers should be brought in, that the fund should be not "*The Times* Fund" but the National Fund. But from the organizer's point of view the advantage of having a great newspaper day by day devoting practically unlimited space to the broadcasting of the appeal and the acknowledgment of subscriptions was overwhelming. It saved a large expenditure in advertising, for only a newspaper which in this way made the cause its own could have been expected to give many columns of its space daily without charge; it simplified and concentrated the work of collection and placed at the disposal of the Society a staff trained in the business of publicity. Robert never doubted that the offer of *The Times* to undertake this part of the work should be accepted, and he soon found himself working intimately and

cordially with Lord Northcliffe and *The Times* staff. A year earlier this would have been the last kind of partnership which he would have thought within the bounds of possibility, but both Northcliffe and Robert had a special liking for men who were unlike themselves, and a warm friendship in which each made the best use of the other soon followed.

The common opinion that a newspaper has only to make an appeal for money to flow in is seldom true, and could not be true of a great fund like *The Times* Red Cross Fund. To keep up the flow meant an immense deal of hard work behind the scenes, in which *The Times* staff co-operated with the Red Cross staff. This for the next four years was a large part of Robert's work as Chairman of the Finance Committee. He developed a remarkable scent both for the benevolent rich who were waiting to give if only they knew where best to give, and for the thriftier kind to whom the duty of giving had to be brought home. I have heard him described as the most skilful beggar of the War period, and all but, if not quite the equal, of Lord Knutsford, whose efforts for the London Hospital had won him that title in the years of peace. Robert was at all times a good letter writer, and he put himself to enormous trouble to approach the right people in the right way and to vary his appeals according to the means and characters of the people he was addressing. And then in addition to these personal appeals, there was the organizing of the general

appeals—the "Our Day" Collections, the British Farmers' Red Cross Appeal, the Christie Sales, the Church collections, the Meat and Allied Trades Red Cross Appeal, the Auction Sale of Wines and Spirits and so forth. These were the work of many hands, but all passed under the review of the Finance Committee and its Chairman, and the whole of the "Our Day" business was placed in Robert's hands. That also entailed an immense correspondence with organizers and workers overseas as well as at home, and a special effort to stir up the Press as the annual "Our Day" collections came round. Throughout the whole of this business Robert was keen on the point that no considerable service should pass without acknowledgment from head-quarters and he was specially anxious that the efforts made by the Dominions should be appreciated at home.

New and ingenious methods of raising money were always being proposed, and some of them needed the most careful scrutiny from the legal point of view. In this, Robert's special friend, Sir Charles Russell, who at his prompting had joined both the War Committee and the Finance Committee, was most useful. The great Pearl Necklace Scheme initiated by Lady Northcliffe was found to need a special Act of Parliament to legalize the proposed lottery, and this the House of Commons refused by the narrow majority of four votes. But the pearls made 41 necklaces, and these, when sold by auction, realized more than

£100,000. The Christie Sales, to which collectors of every sort of rare and valuable objects contributed their treasures, yielded more than £322,000 in the four years of the war. Sir Charles Russell was Chairman of the special Committee which supervised this effort, but Robert could not keep his hands off the book and manuscript part of it. He made himself a thorn in the side of every literary man and book-collector he knew, until they had yielded up first editions, valuable manuscripts, or signed copies of their works to the cause. Some cried out for mercy, and others would gladly have compounded for a handsome subscription to keep their treasures, but when his mind was set on securing a particular prize Robert was seldom to be put off.

The grand total collected in the four years was £21,885,000, of which £16,885,000 was raised or passed through *The Times* Fund. It was a stupendous co-operative effort for which the credit must be widely distributed, but by common consent Robert, as Chairman of the Finance Committee, contributed immensely to its success. In its first Report the Joint War Committee speaks of " the conspicuous ability and discretion with which he carried out his heavy task," and the words aptly describe his special contribution. The discretion was manifested not in any stinting or reluctance to take risks, but in his handling of men, his happy knack of working peacefully with and ensuring smooth working relations between men

of diverse dispositions and gifts. He had the good fortune from the beginning of serving with colleagues in the most responsible positions whom he liked and trusted, and who absolutely trusted him—Sir Arthur Stanley, the Chairman of the Joint War Committee and head over all, Sir William Garstin, the Director of Stores and Transport, Sir Frederick Treves, the Chief of the Department of Medical Personnel, Sir Basil Mayhew, the Secretary of the Finance Committee, Sir Charles Russell, the Chairman of the Collections Committee, and Sir Aurelian Ridsdale, the Chairman of the Demobilization Department—to mention only those with whom he was most intimately associated in his day to day work. But beyond this circle he performed the duties of a liaison officer between all departments with the same quiet modesty and tact that all his life he had brought to his political duties. A Chairman of Finance is often, like a Chancellor of the Exchequer, a figure of terror to his colleagues and subordinates, but Robert's remonstrances, when he thought them necessary, left no wounds behind and he gave himself none of the airs of a dictator ruling by the control of the purse.

On February 9, 1919, Robert attended at Printing House Square to present Red Cross Medals to the printers and other members of *The Times* Staff who had been concerned in the daily publication of the Red Cross Appeal, and the Editor (Mr. Wickham Steed) spoke of him as " one whose name has been

printed in *The Times* more constantly, more conspicuously than that of any other living Englishman." This in allusion to the fact that all subscriptions had to be sent to him, as Chairman of the Joint Finance Committee, at 83, Pall Mall, and every day throughout the war, his name and address had appeared in a prominent position in *The Times*. In paying its tribute to him after his death, *The Times* said that " it could never be fully known to how great an extent the steady flow of gifts from every profession, trade and industry and class in the country throughout the war was due to Sir Robert Hudson's business capacity, personal charm and rare combination of sagacity and enthusiasm."

Mr. Geoffrey Dawson, the editor of *The Times*, adds a note on this part of Robert's work which must be printed here :

The lapse of years has made it difficult to record the details of Robert Hudson's long association with *The Times* in the work of raising and administering the great Fund (amounting in the end to upwards of £15,000,000) for the sick and wounded. But the broad impression remains. From first to last he was the most important, if not the most conspicuous, figure in the whole undertaking. He had all the qualities of sympathy, tact, and enthusiasm needed to inspire it ; and he added to them precisely the right sort of experience in business methods and finance. It is not too much to say that all the other factors which went to make the signal success of the Fund—the generosity of the public ; the standing of the two historic Societies which were brought, not without incessant diffi-

culties, into harmonious co-operation; the traditional and unrivalled power of the *The Times* to raise money for good causes; Lord Northcliffe's genius for publicity; the labours of Sir Arthur Stanley, Sir William Garstin and other eminent colleagues—all these might have been rendered ineffective without the vigilant and practical eye for detail which Robert Hudson contributed.

The staff of *The Times* was necessarily brought into close and constant, sometimes almost daily, contact with him during these four and a half years, and it was the sort of contact which might have been a perpetual source of irritation. As Treasurer of the Fund, Hudson was called upon to address more letters to the Editor for publication than any other correspondent had compassed in a life-time. He was also finally responsible for the immense lists of contributors, filling a total of more than 2,000 columns, which imposed an unusually heavy strain upon the compositors and proof-readers. It would not have been surprising if the staff had been glad to hear the last of him. Yet it is on record that a crowded meeting, representative of all sections and grades in Printing House Square, assembled in the Board room on a February evening in 1919 to offer him an address of congratulation on his finished work. None knew it better than they, and a quotation from one of the speeches made on that occasion may serve to show how they regarded it.

"The foundation and central pillar of the Red Cross work was its finance. It was not merely a question of raising a gigantic sum of money, and of constant ingenuity and resource in appealing for it. It was also a question of regulating its flow, so as never either to run short or to check public generosity by accumulating too much at a time. It was also a question of administration—in such a way that the very last penny should go to the sick and wounded, and of coping with the incessant claims for help which always beset great institutions of this kind both from outside and

from within its own ranks. The public owed a deep debt of gratitude to Sir Robert Hudson for his stewardship of their charity."

The address was accompanied by two inscribed silver tumblers, a memorial of his association with *The Times* which Robert Hudson treasured to the end of his life.

This time no one grudged Robert his honours. In 1918 he was created a Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire, and also received the Legion of Honour. In March 1921 he was made a Knight of Grace of the Order of St. John. In the meantime (December 19, 1920) at a special meeting of the Joint War Finance Committee he was presented with a silver salver bearing the following inscription :

Presented to Sir Robert Arundell Hudson, G.B.E., by the members and secretary of the Joint War Finance Committee, British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John 1914-1920 in grateful remembrance of their Chairman's impartiality and unwearied patience, as well as distinguished ability and judgment, in the transaction of business involving an expenditure of 20 millions sterling on behalf of the sick and wounded sufferers in the Great War.

The presentation was made by Sir William Goschen, the Deputy Chairman, with the support of Sir Arthur Stanley, Lord Plymouth and Mr. (now Sir) Evelyn Cecil, all of whom paid warm tributes to the services of their Chairman.

The work of the Red Cross during these years will be best appreciated by those who know the innumer-

able opportunities of going wrong, the possibilities of friction and quarrel and even of scandal which the collection and administration of a great fund presents. If all these shoals and pitfalls were avoided, and at the end the public judged that the British Red Cross had performed its task with a quiet efficiency which left no ground for criticism, some part of this achievement may justly be ascribed to the ability and judgment, the impartiality and unwearied patience which the Chairman of the Finance Committee brought to his work.

This chapter may fittingly be concluded with tributes paid to their fellow-worker by the two men among those now living with whom he was most closely associated, Sir Arthur Stanley, the Chairman of the Joint War Committee, and Sir Basil Mayhew, the Secretary of the Finance Committee. Sir Arthur Stanley writes :

Sir Robert Hudson came to Devonshire House in the early days of the war to offer his services to the British Red Cross Society, and I have been told that he did so at the instance of Sir Frederick Treves. The organization of the British Red Cross Society was, of course, never contemplated on the scale that became necessary even at the outset of the war, and Sir Robert's help was most welcome. He was beginning to get the British Red Cross Society's finances into shape when the Society joined forces with the Order of St. John and formed a Joint War Committee, with a Joint War Finance Committee of which Sir Robert became Chairman. From that time his war work is recorded in the chronicles of the Committee over

which he presided. The Statement of Accounts and Balance Sheet, which was issued every year, were models of the way in which exceptional expenditure in war-time should be controlled and presented, and received high praise on each occasion of their publication from so eminent authority as Sir William Plender. Sir Robert was always the first to acknowledge and appreciate the help which he received from Mr. (now Sir) Basil Mayhew.

It is interesting in this connexion to see how small a conception we had of the size which our Fund was to attain. Mr. (afterwards Sir Aurelian) Ridsdale, who was the Chairman of the British Red Cross Society when war broke out, at once arranged to make an appeal for funds, but the National Fund—better known as the Prince of Wales's Fund—whose object was general relief on a broader basis than that of the Red Cross, asked that this Appeal might come first and guaranteed £200,000 to the British Red Cross Society in return for the postponement of the latter's Appeal. We all thought that Sir Aurelian had made a very good bargain, and that the £200,000 would put us in ample funds to deal with our war work. That we had not realized the magnitude of the task in front of us is shown by the fact that we ultimately disposed of over £20,000,000. (Twenty million pounds).

In his position as Director of the Red Cross and St. John finances, Sir Robert had not only to control expenditure, but had also to raise the money required, and in a fortunate moment he enlisted the support of Mr. (afterwards Sir Charles) Russell. At that time the Red Cross Societies of our Allies were busily engaged in collecting money in this country, and we had a series of "Days"—France's Day, Russia's Day, etc. Sir Charles suggested that we should also have a "day" for ourselves and he called it "Our Day." The idea caught on at once, and on the first "Our Day" in 1916 we netted over £400,000. On the last "Our Day" in 1918 we realized over

£4,000,000. As by that time we were largely responsible for sending parcels of food, etc. to British prisoners of war in enemy countries, even this large sum was barely sufficient. Sir Charles also organized the collection of money from different trades by the help of those engaged in the trades, and in this connexion I remember attending a luncheon with Sir Charles and Sir Robert to meet the heads of the corset-making industry, which trade had the honour of being the first to organize itself for the job.

Sir Robert was particularly good at composing appeals, and his letters asking for money and acknowledging donations were admirable. His correspondence with the Dominions and Colonies was in no small measure responsible for the very cordial relations which existed between the Red Cross workers of the British Empire overseas and those of the Mother Country. He was also helpful in establishing very cordial relations with the American Red Cross, which culminated in Mr. Endicott, the head of the American Red Cross in England, coming quietly into his office one day in March 1918—one of the blackest times in the war—and handing him a cheque for £250,000 saying that the British Red Cross must be feeling the great strain that was being put upon the British Army and that, as the American Army wasn't yet in a position to give the full support which it intended to give, the American Red Cross thought that this was the most practical way of showing their appreciation of what the British Army was doing.

That Sir Robert's handling of the large sums entrusted to the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John during the war was beyond all praise is universally admitted. To us, who had the privilege of working with him, there was not only the satisfaction of knowing that the work was being done well, but there was the pleasure of doing it with him. His charm of manner, his wit and his delightful sense of humour made work with him a very real joy, and did much to lighten burdens

which at this time were almost intolerable. To me, personally, he was ever the best and kindest of friends, and, although he used to scold me a good deal—and especially in the early days when we had never sufficient money for more than three or four weeks ahead—because there was always fresh work cropping up that I wished to do, I am sure that we both thoroughly enjoyed the performance and looked forward with anticipation to the next interview of a similar character. His was indeed a wonderful stewardship, and countless thousands to whom he brought in practical shape the love and generosity of the great British public, have reason to bless the name and work of Robert Hudson, Chairman of the Joint War Finance Committee of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John.

Sir Basil Mayhew writes :

If the Red Cross are ever called upon to offer again to the country the services which they rendered during the Great War and if they are to achieve the same results as the Joint Committees did during these years, they will have to find, when the time comes, another Arthur Stanley and Robert Hudson. For in spite of all the wonderful devotion of the voluntary and paid workers at Head-quarters and of the Commissioners and their staffs abroad during the war, the success would not have been achieved without the Chairman of the Committee and the Chairman of Finance. These two were as foils, one to the other ; Hudson's clear mind checking and controlling the innumerable schemes for helping the sick and suffering that sprang from Stanley's imagination and initiative.

Robert Hudson was not always easy to work for. He himself worked in great bursts of speed, with intervening days of complete withdrawal and rest, and his renewed vitality, after these intervals, demanded renewed energies from sometimes

wearied assistants. Certainly he expected the utmost; but always he got it, and always his charm and the happiness of his companionship were a compensation and refreshment. He took great trouble over matters of detail and would frequently draw up four or five drafts of a letter before he was satisfied with the finished article. His letters of acknowledgment were especially admirable, and so delightful as, many a time, to call forth an immediate further donation from his correspondent. He was never more persuasive or tactful than when he was dealing with the Press. It was not always easy to say what he wanted to in the columns of some of the papers, though with *The Times* he was always in close contact; but his wiles, and their goodwill almost always gained his end.

Towards the end of the war, the long strain told on Hudson, but he always kept in touch with the position and in particular took great pride in the annual accounts and in the promptitude of their issue to the public. He appreciated to the full the importance of letting the subscribers know what was being done with their money; and never questioned the expense entailed in publishing very detailed accounts; and I attribute to this foresight the fact that in accounting for 20 millions of pounds, the Joint Committee never received any serious adverse criticism. He displayed great tact and wisdom in organizing the financial and accounting departments. No commission was allowed to go abroad without its qualified accountant, and weekly cables were received from these accountants, giving particulars of their financial commitments, and immediate requirements. Weekly, Hudson presented to the Finance Committee a statement of the commitments and requirements of the Joint Committee in all the areas in which it was working, and of the funds available or in sight to meet their demands. He spent much of his time in considering applications for grants and had a peculiar faculty for discerning their weaknesses.

He was beloved by all who worked for him and by those with whom he had to do, but he could be hard on those who lost his confidence. I remember, on one occasion, the giving of a grant, with the further promise of a further grant if accounts were first submitted. The accounts were unsatisfactory, and Hudson's handling of the position resulted in the return of the original grant, to the great relief of the Finance Department. My office lay midway between Arthur Stanley's and Robert Hudson's rooms, so I was, not unnaturally, brought into many of the discussions between the two men. These discussions were often intense and occasionally impatient, but behind them was a deep-rooted friendship, and a solution of the problem was always found.

Robert Hudson was quick in understanding and retentive in memory and possessed an exceptional capacity for visualizing the ultimate effect of any line of policy. If the occasion required him to make a speech he would always prepare it most carefully and would condense what he had to say into the fewest possible words. His room was a meeting-place for all and it was very seldom that one could find him disengaged. Everyone from the highest to the lowest would seek his aid, more particularly when some special or difficult letter had to be composed.

If it was possible for anyone to be happy during the war, those who had the honour to work for Hudson were amongst the happiest, and some of us treasure the memory of little dinners at 13 Dean's Yard, when he gave us, in quiet talk, his trust and friendship, and we returned reluctantly, at a late hour, to the work which must be done.

To these two personal tributes may be added a passage from Lord Northcliffe's book "At the War,"[1] written while the war was still in progress :

[1] "At the War" p. 110.

At the right hand of Mr. Stanley is Sir Robert Hudson. At the outbreak of the war Sir Robert was the Chief Agent of the Liberal party. When war swept over the world he was permitted by the chieftains of his party to throw up his work, and, for the period of the war, to hang up his hat at the headquarters of the Red Cross, and there he has been practically ever since for ten hours a day and longer.

Sir Robert's nominal title in Pall Mall is Chairman of the Joint Finance Committee. His real vocation is Financial Manager of the Red Cross G. H. Q. A man with five million or more pounds in his keeping needs a strong control of his generous impulses, and Sir Robert possesses it. He has the faculty of saying "No" more agreeably than any friend of mine except Mr. Arthur Stanley. He is fully responsible for success or failure. If anything goes wrong with the Red Cross finance, it is he who would be suspended from a lamp-post conveniently situated outside his office in Pall Mall, to which fact his attention is constantly called.

Association with Sir Robert Hudson has taught me a great deal. For a number of years, in common with others of sound political views, I have been engaged in fighting the wicked machinations of the Radical party in England. I surmise now that the reason of many of our failures was the presence of Sir Robert at the Liberal Head-quarters. It is reassuring to know that he is a force with whom we shall not have to contend in the immediate future, for his services have been lent to the Red Cross for the period of the war. Certain optimists concerned in our work are flattering themselves that by a process of peaceful persuasion we shall win Sir Robert from his evil political ways. Whether there is foundation for this hope remains to be seen. He may have a political conscience. But, even if he has, it is permissible to hope that, some day, he may find salvation.

Sir Robert Hudson, who might probably, had he wished it,

have been an influence in one of the great departments of State, links up and controls the infinitely complex organization of the Red Cross with a well-concealed hand of iron. I say unhesitatingly that I hope he and Mr. Arthur Stanley and Sir William Garstin (to name only three of them) will remain where they are until war is a thing of the past.

Accustomed myself to a wearisome round of organization, and believing that I understand something of the direction of staffs, I never visit the Red Cross G.H.Q., and its numerous and varied offshoots abroad without feeling that any change in the administration at 83, Pall Mall, would be a serious blow to a wonderful achievement in efficiency.

The Red Cross has no direct connexion with Government. There are no jobs to be found for office seekers, no rewards are expected or given to the workers. Honours lists pass by unread in the stress of work. Political, social and pecuniary pressures are unknown, though perhaps a little was ineffectually attempted in the early days, before the Stanley-Hudson combination had manifested itself. The true distinction of Red Cross service is that it should pass without "recognition." Even my comments here will, I dare say, be resented by those whom I venture thus to mention.

Another fellow-worker at the Red Cross was Mr. E. V. Lucas, who writes :

I first met Robert Hudson during the War, when he was Chairman of the Red Cross. No better Chairman can be imagined ; he was incisive, humorously tactful and he allowed no extraneous chatter. I came later to know him in his own home, both before his marriage to Lady Northcliffe and after, and I always enjoyed his company.

If I had ever occasion to ask his advice, I should have taken it. I have heard him express what seemed to me the soundest

views on life and its problems. Indeed, I should say that he had more common sense and a shrewder judgment of men than anyone I ever met. But he had to be known. He wore as a kind of armour, a cheery bluff external cynicism which everyone could not tell concealed quick sympathy and a painstaking kindness.

As a literary taster he seemed to me to be very sound too, and he never tired of one of the best subjects that bookish people can develop—Dr. Johnson.

I miss him more than so brief a friendship would ordinarily warrant.

CHAPTER X

AFTER THE WAR

War-time Friendships—Association with Lord Northcliffe—Life After the War—Many Committees—Treves's Advice—Days in the South—Illness and Death of Northcliffe—Marriage with Lady Northcliffe.

THE years of war brought compensations as well as anxieties and responsibilities. Robert made many new friends, and with some of them friendship struck deeper roots in the daily work done in common during the four years than in the coming and going of peace time. Robert seldom lost a friend when made, and most of his Red Cross friends remained among his intimates to the end, but the two who most influenced his life from this time onward were Lord and Lady Northcliffe.

His old political friends shook their heads a little at his growing intimacy with the formidable newspaper magnate who, in his zeal for the conduct of the war, so often troubled their peace and assailed the men whom they trusted. But Robert took men as he found them, and he found in Northcliffe just the driving power that was needed, if the Red Cross was to be

transformed quickly from a parochial benevolent Society—Treves called it a "Mothers' Meeting"—into a National Institution supplying the needs of the soldiers in the Great War. Northcliffe was to the Red Cross what Kitchener was to the Army; he saw the bigness and urgency of the need, and with his great newspaper machine had a unique power of setting the public in motion. His impetuosity and habit of forcing decisions were precisely what the situation needed in the autumn of 1914, and to Robert it seemed mere common sense that the aid which he offered should be accepted and used to the utmost. And for the purpose in hand Northcliffe with his driving and Robert with his discretion made a working combination which could scarcely have been improved upon. No two men could have been more unlike, no two had qualities which were more useful in combination. I have heard it said in after years that, if any man could influence Northcliffe it was Robert Hudson, and to the end of his life, and especially in the last days, Northcliffe had an affection for Robert and a trust in him which amounted almost to dependence. When he went to America on his war-mission at the beginning of 1917, he had a strong premonition that he would not return, and he solemnly charged Robert to guard and befriend his wife, while he was gone and if he should not come back.

The association with Northcliffe began with the

joining up of the Red Cross and Order of St. John and the institution of *The Times* Fund. Robert first met Lady Northcliffe at a Committee at St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell—the Office of the Order of St. John—in October 1914, and after that saw her often at the Joint War Committee of which she was a member and remained a member throughout, though her Officers' Hospital in Grosvenor Crescent occupied much of her time after the first year. But it was not until the autumn of 1915, when she began her weekly lunches of Red Cross workers at St. James's Place, that he became intimate with her and her husband. He was a faithful attendant at these and from that time passed to visiting the Northcliffes in their country homes at Sutton Place and Buckthorne Hill, Crowborough.

In August 1916, Robert's daughter Dorothy married Simon Vernon Harcourt,[1] and set up her own home at Hampstead. He rejoiced in the happiness of his daughter, but her marriage left him once more a solitary man. Day after day his diary records that he dined alone at Dean's Yard after a hard day at Pall Mall. The Northcliffes came to the rescue after a few months, and made him at home in their homes. He was then, as always, a physically frail man and but for the week-ends at Crowborough and the constant care and companionship that his friends gave him,

[1] Simon Vernon Harcourt, second son of Prof. A. G. Vernon Harcourt, F.R.S. (first cousin of Sir William Harcourt) now on the Staff of the London & North-Eastern Railway.

he could scarcely have got through his work. Generally during these years he was in the hands of his doctors, and he was often down with influenza or other ailments which made work difficult or impossible for days at a time. To be able to take his work into the country, and write some of the innumerable letters that fell to him in the quiet and bracing air of the hill-top of Crowborough was almost at times a condition of being able to go on at all.

Another intimate friend, Charles Russell, gave him a refuge at his house at Burnham Beeches, where also he went for short spells during these years. And whatever the stress, he never failed to visit his mother at Lapworth and spend a few days with her. But Felixstowe had to be shut down, and Robert counted himself lucky to have escaped the fate of his neighbour and old friend, Arthur Acland, whose house was commandeered and demolished by the military authorities. He went twice to France on Red Cross business during the war, and Office work in London was varied by visits to hospitals, especially the Star and Garter at Richmond, in the building and equipment of which as a hospital for the totally disabled he took a special interest. The Red Cross workers made a pleasant little society among themselves, and pursued their work and talked their shop at many informal lunches and dinners; and now and again Robert snatched a few hours for golf or an evening for a theatre or concert. But the work went on piling up

and spells of rest had to be paid for by extra spurts to overtake arrears.

The end of the war by no means ended the work of the Red Cross, and least of all the work of the Chairman of the Finance Committee. There were large numbers of wounded who had still to be cared for, and the winding-up, the transition from the War-footing to the Peace-footing, the demobilization of hospitals and units abroad and at home, all remained to be done and kept a large part of the staff busily at work during the next three years. In addition to his duties at Pall Mall, Robert now had his political work both for the Federation at Parliament Street and for the Liberal Central Association at Abingdon Street. Between the two the list of the Committees that he was expected to attend, and did attend, looks portentous. On the Red Cross side there were the Joint War Committee, the Joint Finance Committee, the Voluntary Hospitals Commission, the Demobilization Committee, the War Graves Committee, and many consultations with Sir Robert Jones and King Manoel about the orthopædic work which was the special charge of those two. On the political side there were the N.L.F. Executive, the N.L.F. Finance, the Liberal Publication Department, and conferences innumerable at Parliament Street and Abingdon Street. Robert was also Joint Treasurer of Westminster Hospital, which was now making an appeal in which he took an active part, Treasurer

of the Sulgrave Manor Board, a trustee of the Westminster Spiritual Aid Fund, a trustee of Sir Ernest Cassel's Hospital at Swaylands, and in 1922 was appointed a Director of the Sun Life Assurance Society. His pocket diaries are peppered with the dates of the meetings of these bodies, and though it is beyond belief that he attended them all, he certainly did attend a great many, and was extremely conscientious about duties which other men in his position might have considered nominal.

Bursts of work in which he exhausted himself were followed by periodic break-downs in which he was laid up for days, and even weeks with sciatica and influenza. The ups and downs of these years may be traced in the letters which Sir Frederick Treves, now one of the closest of his friends, wrote to him almost weekly from 1919 onwards till Treves's death in 1923. At the end of the war Treves had decided to live most of the year out of England ; and he divided his time between Vevey, Evian, the South of France, and a few weeks in England, occasionally returning to his profession when an old friend or royal patient commandeered his services, but employing much of his time in writing travel books which had considerable success. His letters abound in lively and sometimes caustic descriptions of the doings of the great and fashionable who flocked to the Riviera in winter and spring, and he offers much friendly (and gratuitous) medical advice. When a book was about to be pub-

lished Robert was active in writing to publishers and priming reviewers. He did the same services very zealously for his old friend, Charles Gatty, whose book, "Mary Davies and the Manor of Ebury," in effect the story of the House of Grosvenor and the Westminster estate, was published in 1921.

Treves appears to have had some difficulty in understanding that even though the war was over Robert had occupations at home which limited his freedom to move about, and his constantly repeated exhortation was to "come out." "Surely," he writes when Robert has reported that he is being treated for sciatica, "a day in the blaze of the sun within sight of the sea would do you far more good than a course of massage carried out by a perspiring female in an atmosphere of gloom." Lively details are added as to the joys awaiting him if he will only break loose and come. Rooms are being taken for the great "Jackie Fisher" who announces himself as coming out with a retinue of friends, including a sick midshipman. Treves surmises that before the end of the week Fisher will write to say that he is bringing a balloonist and a chartered accountant and implores Robert to be on the spot when he arrives.

Robert needed no great persuasion, if only the road could be cleared of the tangle of engagements in London, and during the next three years (1919-1922) he spent a good many weeks in winter and spring in the south of France, where his old friends had

charming villas in which there was always a room waiting for him. The Northcliffes were at Roquebrune or Cap d'Ail, where not only Robert but his friends, and especially Treves and Charles Gatty, were welcome guests; Sir Ernest Cassel was at Monte Carlo, and Charles Russell came as often as possible. The weeks in the South slipped away in delightful excursions and jolly parties, and to judge from the joint testimony of Robert and Treves, there seems never to have been a day on which the sun did not shine in all these years.

But at the beginning of 1922, Northcliffe's state of health was a growing anxiety. He had returned from his journey round the world tired and exhausted, and he had symptoms which caused great concern to his doctors. He was ordered to Evian for a cure, and Robert, as his diary records, went to Bellegrade to meet him on June 17th, and brought him on to Evian. There he became at once dangerously ill, and the days that followed were a time of great anxiety and difficulty, in which the one fortunate fact was that Treves was staying in the same hotel. But Northcliffe was pathetically dependent on Robert, whom he wished to have always with him, and for days and nights together Robert only left his bedside to snatch short intervals of sleep. After a fortnight, Northcliffe recovered sufficiently to be brought back to London and Carlton Gardens. Robert accompanied him and Lady Northcliffe on this journey, and saw the doctors

and members of the family immediately on his arrival. The illness was diagnosed as an obscure and incurable heart affection, and after lingering for six weeks, during most of which he was only partly conscious, Northcliffe died on August 22, 1922.

Towards the end of January in the following year Robert confided to Dorothy and one old friend, Charles Russell, that he and Lady Northcliffe were to marry. Never did a marriage seem more predestined or more completely right. They had been friends in need to each other over many years; he had shared her anxieties at many difficult moments. Their attachment was deep and mutual, and there was nothing to keep them apart. It was the desire of both of them that they should be married quite quietly by their old friend, the Bishop of Worcester, in his private chapel at Hartlebury Castle, where Robert had stayed so often in recent years; and so it happened on the morning of April 4, 1923. On the evening before he wrote to Charles Gatty:

13, Dean's Yard,
Westminster Abbey, S.W.
April 3rd.

My dearest Charles,

I go down to-day with Molly and Dorothy to spend a night at Hartlebury Castle with the Bishop of Worcester and his sister. After breakfast to-morrow we walk along the corridor into the private chapel, and there Molly and I will be married at 10 o'clock. We shall leave immediately after for Italy, and shall not return until the 1st week of May.

I shall then move into 19, Cowley Street, and surrender this little house to Charles Russell, who, for 20 years, has said to me "let me have 13, Dean's Yard if ever you give it up."

Apart from Dorothy and Charles Russell, and Molly's lawyer, and the Bishop and his sister, no one knows. We shall be speeding across France before our friends learn of it. And as we are having no letters forwarded, we must wait till early May to discover what our friends think of us!

About you, we have no doubt. You will give us your blessing, and wish us well, and come and tell us this as soon as we send you word that we are back.

Ever your devoted,
R.

The secret was well kept, and Robert and his wife were well on their wedding journey before the newspapers got wind of it. He wrote to the Bishop from Venice:

Grand Hotel,
Venice.
Saturday, 14.

My dear Ernest,

I plead guilty, my Lord, and I throw myself on the mercy of the Castle.

Not a letter have I written to anyone, bar a note to Dorothy while I was in Paris. We've been here a week to-morrow, and I don't recall having touched a pen. To abstain from writing is to me an important ingredient in the ideal holiday.

And it *is* an ideal holiday! My dear Molly is more dear than ever: Venice is more peaceful and lovely than when I last saw it: we have a delightful suite of rooms in an ancient palazzo on the Grand Canal: no noise, no dust, and (Heaven

be praised) no mosquitos in April. We float about the lagoons and canals for 4 or 5 hours a day admiring Nature's Pictures. Of the other pictures, with pedigrees, I haven't yet seen one !

My mind constantly reverts to Hartlebury, and to that beautiful morning Service, and to the wonderful kindness which you and your sister showed to us. We can never repay you. We can't even thank you with any adequateness. We can only cherish an abiding gratitude and affection.

When we are back and settled in at Cowley Street and Crowborough we would like to think that you and your sister will come and see us in one or other, or both, of our homes.

Much love, dear man, to you both.

Your grateful and affectionate,

Robert.

CHAPTER XI

THE LIBERAL PARTY AND ITS FINANCES

Asquith at Dean's Yard—Work at Abingdon Street—Anxiety and Hope—The Financial Storm-Centre—The 1923 Election—The Lloyd George Fund—Negotiations with Mr. Lloyd George—The Disaster of 1924—The Million Fund—Its Difficulties—The General Strike and Lord Oxford's Resignation—Renewed Negotiations with Mr. Lloyd George—Their Outcome—Resignation of Offices.

ON January 3, 1919, Robert wrote to his friend Pearce, now Bishop of Worcester : " Asquith and two or three of his colleagues lunched with me here to-day, thinking it moderately free from observation." A letter to another Westminster friend records an impression of this occasion. " Asquith so quiet, so cool and high-minded, entirely without malice and rancour, so unlike——." The circumstances certainly demanded all the fortitude of which an Independent Liberal was capable. His party had been practically wiped out at the election in the previous December, in which it had been compelled, without time or opportunity for a political campaign, to take up the rôle of Opposition to a Government

which was appealing in the hour of victory for a mandate to negotiate the peace. Its plight, always beyond hope, had been made worse by the ingenious device of the "coupon" whereby Liberals had been sorted into sheep and goats, the sheep being those who had given an unqualified support to the Government, and the goats those who had been rash enough to criticize it, and even on one occasion to divide against it. At the end only 26 Independent Liberals survived, and Asquith himself, having been rejected by his Scottish constituents, was for the first time in his long career outside Parliament.

To his old friend Mr. Frank Wright of Birmingham, a pillar of the Federation with whom he was always in touch, Robert wrote on January 2, 1919:

13, Dean's Yard,
Westminster Abbey, S.W.

My dear Frank,

I don't trust myself to write what I feel! I implore you not to join those who are demanding a great and instant meeting of the N.L.F.

Mere declamation is no good. We must have plans for the future, and, if the Gods are good, we may have some false step by our opponents before we have to make a public appearance. There's nothing to be gained by licking our bruises in public: still less by pretending that we aren't bruised. *We are*. Twice as many people voted as ever before, and we have been swept away as no Party ever was, or ever will be again.

The country will require time to rid itself of this fever.

While it has a temperature of this sort, don't let us provoke it further. Time will right us if we can bide our opportunity. The task before us is no light one. But if we have wisdom and courage and can take long views and lay our plans with patience, we can win through when this atmosphere of war has blown away. *Until then* we are a feeble folk.

Good night. It is high time I went to bed. I've been working for 15 hours on end.

Ever,

R. A. H.

At its first annual meeting after the war, the Federation chose for its President Sir George Lunn, who like two of his predecessors, Dr. Spence Watson and Sir William Angus, was a leading citizen of Newcastle, which he had contested unsuccessfully in the disastrous election of 1918. Sir George made his year of office memorable for an appeal for funds, which yielded useful results at a timely moment and helped the Federation to remain self-supporting for the next few years. He resigned at the end of the year, and was succeeded by Mr. J. M. Robertson, a former member of Mr. Asquith's Government and by common consent one of the ablest and most gifted members of the Liberal party. On most subjects except politics President and Secretary held opinions about as divergent as opinions could well be, the one being a conscientious secularist, and the other a strong Churchman, but as in the case of Edward Clodd, this was no bar to warm friendship and the strongest mutual respect. Robertson's learning and wide

range of interests made a special appeal to Robert, and he always spoke with gratitude and affection of his three years' association with him.

Robert had never wavered in his allegiance to Asquith and the Independent Liberals, and in 1916 when Mr. Lloyd George offered him a high office he unhesitatingly declined. The offer could not have been without attractiveness to him; he had more than once thought of standing for Parliament; his means were very moderate, and his prospects, if he remained with the Independent Liberals, were at least very uncertain. But all this weighed as nothing against his strong disapproval of the manner in which Mr. Asquith's Government had been overthrown, and his doubts about the Government which succeeded it. When the war was over, the reputation that he had made for himself by his Red Cross work would have opened many doors to him, if he had decided to quit politics, but the mere fact that his old party was in distress forbade these means of escape and made it, in his eyes, an imperative duty to return to his old posts in Parliament Street and 21 Abingdon Street (where the Liberal Central Association was now housed), and take up the seemingly desperate task of re-establishing its fortunes.

But the scene to which he returned was a very different one from that which he had left in 1914. Percy Illingworth, the Chief Whip who had succeeded the Master of Elibank in 1912, a young man of bril-

liant promise with whom Robert had been on intimate and affectionate terms, had died prematurely in January 1915,[1] and John Gulland who succeeded him and had done all that a Whip could do in time of war, was in ill-health and about to retire. It was decided in the new circumstances that the Whips should concentrate on the work in Parliament and leave the general control, selection of candidates and financing of the party in other hands. From 1921 onwards this general control was exercised by Lord Gladstone, who, as in all times of difficulty, had come back to offer his services to the party, Mr. Geoffrey Howard and Robert, these three working within the Office at Abingdon Street, but always in close touch with Sir Donald Maclean who, in Mr. Asquith's absence, had led the party in Parliament, and with Mr. Asquith himself, the leader of the party. In 1923, when he became Chief Whip, Mr. Vivian Phillipps came into this circle, and remained in it in the subsequent years, when he had lost his seat. These men worked together as one

[1] In a tribute written for *The Liberal Agent*, Robert said of Illingworth :

"Those who know little or nothing of the work of Parliamentary Whips and Party managers, imagine that all their operations are secret and subterranean, that mystery is the essence of the craft, that in politics one never lays the cards upon the table. The Party Agent knows better than this. Simple honesty of purpose, coupled with plain, straightforward speaking, are just as serviceable in the political world as in any other walk in life. It was *character* which made Mr. Illingworth what he was, ensuring for him the devotion of his friends and the respect of his opponents.

"This is the second case in my time where a Chief Whip has died at his post. Both Tom Ellis and Percy Illingworth were young men in the prime of life. Both gave themselves unselfishly and unreservedly to the work of their most onerous office, scorning delights and living laborious days. It becomes a question whether any man, young and robust though he be when he takes up that work, can do all that is expected of a Chief Whip without certain injury to his health. Some measure of devolution seems to be called for."

team and troubled themselves little about the boundaries between their different functions and responsibilities, so long as they could get the work done.

It was difficult and uphill work. The old machine had rusted during the war ; the Coalition had played havoc with party allegiance, and Labour, which had kept its organization intact and pursued its propaganda unceasingly during the war, had gained a long start. Finance was from the beginning a great anxiety. There was enough money remaining in the party chest for one more election, and with economy something might be left for a second, but the ordinary sources of replenishment were shut off, and generous as they were, the few rich men who remained faithful could not be expected to find the large sum necessary to finance a political party. The rally of 1919 had provided the National Liberal Federation with a sufficient sum to carry on for a few years, but after that it could not look with any certainty to headquarters for grants-in-aid and must either be self-supporting or greatly curtail its activities. Democracies are supposed to work in a free atmosphere which enables all sorts of opinions to be registered at the polls, but in fact the difficulty of maintaining a minority party, which has no immediate prospect of returning to power, and no regular sources of supply such as Labour finds in the Trade Unions, is immense, as the Independent Liberals were to discover during the next few years.

Still there were grounds for hope and encouragement. Robert could claim with pride that the Federation remained intact, and that the vast majority of its members, the "good men" in the country, were true to the undiluted Liberal faith. The Independent Liberals, or "Wee Frees" as they were now dubbed, did great work in Parliament and in the next four years found themselves fighting on the old Liberal ground of Ireland and Free Trade. These were happy and active years, and with Gladstone, Donald Maclean and Geoffrey Howard as fellow-workers, Robert found himself in thoroughly congenial company. When Maclean lost his seat in Parliament at the 1922 election, the disaster was in part redeemed by the opportunity which now offered of appointing him President of the Federation. About the same time Robert exchanged his position of Secretary for that of Treasurer of the Federation, but he remained one of the "big four" at Abingdon Street, and during the next eighteen months the whole team worked together on a scheme for modernizing the Federation and making the District Federations active and responsible parts of its organization. The scheme itself was mainly Lord Gladstone's, but Robert worked his hardest to explain it and get it adopted, and it was largely through his clear guidance that it was unanimously adopted at a Conference at Buxton on May 30, 1923.

So far all had gone well, or fairly well. The Wee

Frees had come back 60-strong from the 1922 election, and at the election in the following year, when reunion had been effected on the Free Trade issue, the united party won a hundred seats, and with 158 members in the House of Commons seemed well on the way to re-establish itself as a great Parliamentary force. But at this point the Liberal recovery received a sharp check, and the events of 1924 revealed all the difficulties inherent in the situation and the limits of the reunion that had been effected for the purpose of the 1923 election.

Finance was from now onwards the storm-centre of the party, and, as Treasurer of the Federation, Robert was deeply involved in it. The rapid succession of elections had greatly depleted the funds of Liberal head-quarters, and with the probability that another would follow within a few months, the position was highly critical at the beginning of 1924. Money was wanted for everything, for the new organization in the country, for propaganda, and above all for candidates. When the reunion was effected in the autumn of 1923, it was assumed at Liberal head-quarters that union on policy would be accompanied by union of funds. Mr. Lloyd George had at his personal disposal the large fund which he had brought with him when the Coalition broke up, and at the election which followed immediately upon reunion a substantial contribution was offered by him towards the head-quarters' expenses of the campaign. This

was accepted in the belief that it was the preliminary to a merger of the funds of the reunited party. After the election, when it was clear that another election could not be long delayed, it was necessary, in order to proceed with the fixing of candidates, to make certain that the joint arrangement for financing the election which had just taken place would hold good for the next election, whenever it should come. The view of the Abingdon Street team was that in order to avoid the reproach that it was not making a serious bid for power, the party should run 500, or at the very least, 450 candidates at the coming election. This would be made possible by a joint arrangement similar to that which had provided the expenses of the recent contest. The position was placed before Mr. Lloyd George by Liberal head-quarters early in 1924, but at once it appeared that he was not ready to commit himself to any definite undertaking. The argument went backwards and forwards, and a great deal of ground was explored but no progress was made. Several months were spent in these negotiations, the general result of which afterwards became public knowledge through a memorandum by Lord Gladstone published two years later in *The Times* (June 11, 1926). Briefly, Mr. Lloyd George thought the number of candidates excessive, and could not be persuaded to contribute more than half the sum which the others thought necessary. The delays while the negotiations went

forward had held up the preparations for the election, and lack of funds at the end required the number of Liberal candidates to be reduced from the 500 aimed at to 343. The result was a disaster comparable to that of 1918, and the party in the House of Commons found itself reduced from 158 to 42. The Zinovieff letter no doubt contributed largely to this result, but it was the unanimous opinion of agents and organizers in the country that Liberals had greatly suffered by the paucity of their candidates and general feebleness of their attack.

Robert had played a large part in the negotiations with Mr. Lloyd George, and he came out of them with a strong conviction that if the party was to recover its lost ground, it must make itself independent of the Lloyd George Fund. For that fund was not, as he regarded it (or indeed as Mr. Lloyd George himself regarded it), in any real sense a "party fund." The essence of the party fund according to the tradition in which Robert had been brought up, was that it should be vested in the Chief Whip, which meant that it should be at the disposal of the party for any purpose which its leaders, interpreting the general sense of the party, approved or thought necessary. The Whip was trustee for the party as a whole and purely in virtue of his official position. When he ceased to be Chief Whip, the fund passed to his successor, and no individual leader was in a position to attach conditions to its use, or, if the money was

available, to refuse its use for purposes which the agents and organizers thought necessary. The Lloyd George Fund, on the contrary, was in the undisputed control of Mr. Lloyd George; he could withhold it or allot it at his pleasure, attach conditions touching organizations, persons, or even, it might be, policy, for its use. Nor, if the fund was his and not the party's, could reasonable complaint be made of his using it in this way. On that assumption he was entitled to lay down his own conditions, to allot more or less, according to his discretion; to take exception to persons whom he mistrusted or thought hostile. But it was just this personal control and the power that an individual might acquire over the party by the use of it, which the traditional method of handling a party fund had hitherto avoided, and it was this to which Gladstone, Maclean and Robert took the strongest exception.

To make the party self-supporting seemed therefore the first necessity after the 1924 election, and hopes ran high when the "Million Fund" was launched in January 1925 under the direction of Vivian Phillipps. A new function now devolved upon the National Liberal Federation. In conjunction with eight specially appointed representatives of other departments of the party organization, its Executive formed the Administrative Committee to whom was committed the management and control for the future of all party funds. Ambitious as the "Million Fund"

project looked, there should, in favourable circumstances, have been no difficulty in raising a very large sum over a period of four years—the probable duration of the 1924 Parliament. The ground was well prepared both in London and the country, and an army of willing workers was soon enlisted. But two difficulties were almost immediately encountered. First the district federations and local associations, which were the centres for collections, were themselves in a state of necessity and were naturally reluctant to pass on to head-quarters money collected locally, until their own needs were met. But next, and much more serious, the existence of the Lloyd George Fund was by this time a matter of public knowledge, and a large number of those who were appealed to for subscriptions wanted to know why this stupendous effort was necessary, and why the nakedness of the land should be thus proclaimed, if there was in fact a sum of money sufficient for all present needs in the hands of one of the leaders.

This placed the organizers of the "Million Fund" in a dilemma. To launch a great appeal for funds with the avowed object of making the party independent of one of its leaders was plainly impossible, and yet no other explanation met the case. If they could have said that the Lloyd George Fund was a myth or that it was exhausted, the way would have been clear ; but when they said merely that it was not available, or hinted that, if available, it was not desirable for them

to avail themselves of it, they were immediately asked why, and the question could not be answered without raising a controversy which would have been ruinous to the fund and extremely damaging to the unity of the party. The circumstances were fatal to success on any large scale. A big fund might have been raised on the basis that there was no money, but it could not be raised on the basis that there was a large sum of money which for reasons impossible to explain could not be drawn upon.

In this way the Lloyd George Fund hung over the "Million Fund," and finally extinguished it. The small subscribers ear-marked their subscriptions for their local Associations; the bigger ones wanted to know more of the facts before they gave freely. A high proportion of the subscriptions took the form of promises, which were unlikely to mature unless the situation was cleared up. In the circumstances it was remarkable that so much was brought in. But the amount was altogether insufficient to provide an election fund and only just sufficient to enable the new Administrative Committee to meet the day by day expenses of the head-quarters' organization. The National Liberal Federation obtained for its own purposes enough to finance itself independently for another two years, but the competing appeal of the "Million Fund" for general party needs was drawing heavily on the sources of supply, and, as the predominant partner in the Administrative Committee which

was responsible for the organization of the "Million Fund" effort, the Federation found itself in the embarrassing position of having to promote an appeal, which in proportion as it was successful, was bound to make it increasingly difficult to obtain subscriptions for purely Federation purposes. Robert felt his position as Treasurer of the Federation to be becoming intolerable and more than once in 1925 and 1926 he warned the Federation that he would be unable to go on unless the response was more generous. "As for money," he told Maclean at the end of 1926, "the answer is simple, there ain't none."

The crisis came with Mr. Lloyd George's action during the General Strike in 1926, and the sharp division of opinion between him and Lord Oxford on that matter. The situation which Robert and the old guard of the Federation had foreseen now presented itself in an even acuter form than they had predicted. There was now a schism which could not be concealed from the public, but the official leader of the party, instead of having at his disposal a party organization well supplied with the sinews of war, found himself in a beleaguered fortress which was in imminent danger of being starved out by an opponent who was richly endowed.

The Federation was faithful but distracted. It greatly desired to retain Lord Oxford as leader, but the differences which had now arisen between him and Mr. Lloyd George had brought the "Million Fund"

effort of the Administrative Committee to a standstill, and in the circumstances no new appeal could be expected to succeed. There was enough money left to carry on the head-quarters' organization for another six months or so, but at the end of that time the Administrative Committee saw itself left with no funds to administer, and the imminent prospect of having to appeal to Mr. Lloyd George, who would then be in a position to impose his own conditions. That such a situation could arise was just what in Robert's eyes made the existence of a personal fund fatal to the independence and healthy life of the party.

In October 1926 Lord Oxford resigned the leadership of the party, and a month later the Administrative Committee was called upon to decide whether it would accept proposals for a subvention to the party from Mr. Lloyd George's fund, on terms. Robert and his group were in a position of extreme difficulty, but they held out manfully against the acceptance of terms of any kind, as being wholly inconsistent with the freedom of action and judgment which a Liberal party ought always to exercise. All this however weighed nothing against the immediate emergency, and after more or less higgling, the Administrative Committee by a narrow majority accepted Mr. Lloyd George's conditions. One of these was the removal from head-quarters of Vivian Phillipps, with whom Robert had worked on the most intimate terms during

the previous years. That such a condition could be exacted he felt as justifying his worst forebodings, and apart from loyalty to an old friend, he had no doubt that he was bound to resist it to the uttermost.

I found myself intimately associated with Robert in the last phase of these transactions, for in the year 1926 I was elected President of the Federation in succession to Donald Maclean. When I accepted the nomination in March of that year there was no sign of the impending troubles, and I remember gratefully Robert's concern lest in urging me to accept, as he did, he should have lured me into a false position, and the trouble to which he put himself to make my election secure. As President of the Federation I was *ex officio* Chairman of the Administrative Committee, and in this capacity it became my business to preside at the discussions which took place during the closing weeks of 1926 on Mr. Lloyd George's offer of financial assistance, and I had the opportunity of seeing Robert do battle on his native heath. He was amazingly competent at all stages, and could be absolutely relied upon for exact knowledge of every detail in the whole tangled business. His speeches were brief and incisive, and nearly always seasoned with a touch of dry humour ; he kept his temper perfectly under control, and though firm on his points he made them with a courtesy and friendliness which left no sense behind of driving or overbearing. Looking back, it is impossible not to think with a certain remorse of how much of

his ebbing strength he spent on the controversies of these years; but something was at stake to which he had given his life, and though he was aware that defeat awaited him, he felt, I think, a very real satisfaction in fighting to the last for the independence of the party which he had served continuously for nearly fifty years.

On January 21, 1927 he resigned the secretaryship of the Liberal Central Association. This was the end. He felt like the rest of us who shared his views that he could not remain responsible for administering either the funds of the Federation or party funds generally in the conditions now accepted. He had retired from the treasurership of the Federation in June, 1926, but had been persuaded to remain on the Executive as one of its co-opted members. The moment had now come when he saw no alternative but to break the last link with official Liberalism. The times were not propitious for compliments or expressions of gratitude. He had received both in abundance at other stages in his career, but this time no one seemed to perceive that he had gone.

CHAPTER XII

LAST DAYS

Cultivating his Garden—Travels Abroad—Hill Hall —A Journey to Egypt—Illness at Luxor—Return Home—A Visit to Scotland—Last Illness and Death —Burial in Westminster Cloisters.

A MAN can stand a great deal of political adversity if he is happy in his own home, and Robert was supremely happy in these years. He was devoted to his wife ; he and she had troops of friends ; his daughter was happily married and now the mother of two children who were a new source of happiness. Many pleasant parties gathered at 19, Cowley Street, and all the old intimates were welcome at Buckthorne Hill. More and more Robert's thoughts turned towards releasing himself from London ties and gaining his freedom to live in the country and travel when the spirit moved him. " I shall buy a season ticket," he had told a friend just before his marriage, " and if Molly will remain in her garden, I guarantee that I will bolt back to her with a minimum of delay. There's something wrong at our age that we should have a country Paradise and not see more of it in the sweet of the year." It proved not quite so

easy to break loose as he supposed, when it came to the point. Political friends said that he was indispensable and had no right to leave them in such abominable circumstances as they now found themselves. He was Chairman, Trustee and Treasurer of half a dozen important organizations and charities, and had lately become a director of an important Insurance Company. The Red Cross work went on unceasingly. The resolution to spend the major part of his time in the garden at Buckthorne Hill was sadly broken in upon, and a rashly recorded vow to have done with politics after the 1924 election remained, as already recorded, unfulfilled for the next three years.

But subject to the duties which he imposed on himself he was now free to come and go very much as he liked, and he spent much more of his time with his wife at Crowborough in the summer and in the South of France in the winter. The only shadow on the prospect was his health, and he was often seized with his old enemy sciatica, which, as Treves insisted, had to be taken seriously, not so much in itself as for the general state of health which it implied. The doctors were peremptory in 1924 that he should go to Aix for a cure, and follow it up with an after-cure in the mountains, and this he did both that year and the two following years. This seemed to have good results and he was on a better level of health for the next two years. Between politics, philanthropy and society, his life was a very full and active one, and when

his friends assured him that he was one of the happiest and luckiest of men, he modestly admitted that they were right. There was a consensus of opinion among them that if any two people deserved the happiness which had now come to them, it was Robert and his wife.

Early in 1925 a new interest entered into their lives. They would make a perfect home for themselves in the country. It should be within reach of London, not so near as to be less than truly country, or so far as to prevent its being their one permanent home from which London could be easily reached. The opportunity offered to secure Hill Hall, on the outskirts of Epping Forest, a famous and beautiful Elizabethan and early Jacobean house with a lovely park and garden, which perfectly answered these conditions. It gave Lady Hudson full scope for her unique gift and perfect taste in the planning of gardens, and the furnishing and appointment of a noble house; and it brought Robert into a new world in which his love of old and beautiful things and his natural connoisseurship played their part. He had now a beautiful book-room with space for his books and his own little church on the edge of the park. With its forest surroundings Hill Hall was truly in the heart of the country and yet within an hour's drive of London. To make a perfect thing of it, to bring old friends there and make new ones, to have all the chances of planning and improving, as the

years went on, was a delightful prospect bringing new interests and happiness to both Robert and his wife.

So Beach House, 13, Dean's Yard, Buckthorne Hill and 19, Cowley Street were sold and Hill Hall came into their possession in May 1925. An entry in Robert's pocket diary records that they went there first for a night on June 10th. The next months were spent in furnishing and making such alterations as they had decided on, but by the end of October the house was ready for the servants to move in, and on November 5 they came themselves, the date being marked with a note of exclamation in the diary.

Within a short time Hill Hall had become a happy centre for all their friends, young and old, especially young, for Robert loved the young and liked to have them about him. Glancing at the visitors' book one's eye catches the names of J. M. Barrie, Mr. and Mrs. Rudyard Kipling, Lord Buckmaster, Lord and Lady Gladstone, Lord and Lady Lee of Fareham, Augustine Birrell, Charles Russell, J. L. Garvin, among scores who were their guests in the next three years. On June 29, 1926, the Queen came to lunch and stayed all the afternoon, and planted a tree. The Bishop of Worcester came more than once and preached in the little church to its maximum congregation of 100 souls. There were parties for the neighbouring villagers, and for old people and children from East London and Westminster. Robert was busy all

the time with the work described in the last two chapters, and when engagements were pressing, he and his wife spent their nights in London, but Hill Hall was their home and it brought great happiness to both.

Early in January, 1927, Robert and his wife decided to vary the South of France habit by going farther afield, and spending February and March in Egypt; and on the 28th of the month they started from Tilbury for Port Said in the s.s. *Cathay*, and on arrival went straight to Assuan which they reached on February 9. While there, he seemed perfectly well and enjoyed himself greatly, and he still seemed well when they moved to Luxor on March 1. But on the following morning he woke up with a high temperature after a restless night and the hotel doctor diagnosed influenza. He grew visibly worse during the day, and his wife, becoming alarmed, telegraphed to Cairo for a doctor. Dr. Brown of the Gezireh Hospital came by the night train and diagnosed pneumonia. For the next week Robert was desperately ill, and the pneumonia was complicated by a pneumococcal infection which developed in his right arm and necessitated an operation. There were times when he seemed beyond hope, and nothing but the unremitting care and devotion of his wife, the doctors and three nurses who were in charge of the case, could have saved his life. By a stroke of good fortune, which seemed all but miraculous to Lady Hudson in her distress and anxiety, there arrived at the hotel a well-known Swiss

doctor, Dr. de la Harpe of Vevey, who, finding her alone in her struggle, unhesitatingly gave up his holiday and took charge of the case with the support and help of his wife. With him was a brilliant young Swiss surgeon who did the necessary operation most skilfully at a moment's notice. At the end of a week Robert rallied, and after a fortnight it was decided to get him out of the heat of Luxor, and take him by night in a special saloon car to Cairo. The journey was an anxious one, for he was terribly weak, but Dr. de la Harpe went with him, and he was brought safely to the Anglo-American Hospital at Gezireh, where he convalesced steadily during the next fortnight. On April 3, he was well enough to take the journey to Port Said, and to be brought back to England in the s.s. *Otranto*. By this time Robert's brother, Harry, had come out, and he accompanied him on the homeward journey. Tilbury was reached on April 14, and Robert and his wife drove straight to Hill Hall, taking with them the Sister who had come up to Luxor and who nursed him devotedly from the second day of his illness until he was well enough to dispense with a nurse.

It was a terrible time, and "even more," as Robert said, " for Molly than for myself," but it left both of them overflowing with gratitude to doctors, nurses and the score of kind friends who, happening to be on the spot, had put aside everything to bring help and comfort. Lord Lloyd, the High Commissioner, had

found Dr. Brown and sent him from Cairo, and again by aeroplane at a critical moment, and both he and his wife were for the whole month immeasurably kind, whether it was sending help to Luxor or helping in Cairo. Mr. Howard Carter provided special and necessary things from his own house.[1] As they looked back on it, the services rendered to them in Luxor, in Cairo, and on their homeward journey, seemed to Robert and his wife beyond reckoning.

He was so far recovered as to be able to go to London in the first weeks in May, and except that his arm was stiff after his operation, he resumed more or less his normal life; and his secretary describes him at this time as "doing masses of work." He seemed indeed to be getting quite well again, and his friends congratulated him on having recovered so quickly from such a serious illness. Most of the following weeks were spent at Hill Hall and he was entirely happy in being there again, and surrounded by friends. But in July he began to complain of pains in his back and at the end of the month went under doctor's advice to Woodhall Spa for treatment of what was supposed to be lumbago. This did him little good, and at the beginning of September he moved on to Gullane in Scotland where he and his wife had taken a house for the autumn. There again he seemed fairly

[1] Others whose kindness at this time Lady Hudson gratefully remembers were Mr. Robert Hichens, Sir Roderick and Lady Jones, Mrs. Melville Balfour, Sir Pomeroy and Lady Burton, the Hon. Mrs. Alan Lascelles, Col. Cyril Hughes, the Representative of the Imperial War Graves Commission in Egypt and the Near East.

well, and though his arm prevented him from playing golf, he was lively and active. But the supposed lumbago persisted, and at the beginning of October his doctors in consultation prescribed complete rest in a nursing home. So active was he in mind and body that this was thought to be the only way of compelling him to relax. He submitted and remained for six weeks apparently well. Up to this time there had been no thought of any serious illness or danger. But on November 17 pneumonia again set in and on November 25 he died.

On the evening of November 28, his brother Harry and his son-in-law, Simon Harcourt, brought his ashes in a casket to the door of the Cloister of Westminster Abbey, where they were met by the Dean, and the casket placed on a bier covered with a purple pall. This, borne by six bearers, was carried through the dimly-lit Cloister, and thence into the half-lit Abbey—the Dean reciting prayers as they went—and up the South Aisle, past Poets' Corner, into St. Faith's Chapel, where after a short service, it was left before the altar for the night. The next morning it was taken to the grave in the Cloister where the Precentor read the Committal Service in the presence of the Dean and the Abbey clergy, and Robert's two brothers, Harry and Ernest, and his son-in-law. With this simple and touching ceremony he was laid to rest where he would most have wished, and within a stone's throw of the house in which he had lived for the greater

part of his working life. A stone bearing the name "Robert Arundell Hudson, G.B.E." and the dates of his birth and death marks the place.

A few minutes later the funeral service took place in St. Margaret's Church where a great company had gathered to show their respect for his memory. The list of those present faithfully reflected his many activities. Politicians of all camps, Red Cross workers, doctors, soldiers, literary men, journalists, all joined in this last tribute. Canon Carnegie wrote a few days later to Lady Hudson, "It was a real service : not a mere perfunctory tribute but an expression of real sympathy and sorrow and admiration on the part of all who were present at it. No one who took part in it could fail to recognize this." Many were in tears that day, and not least among the mourners were the staff from Hill Hall and his own servants from Dean's Yard—faithful for many years—all of whom held him in deep affection.

CHAPTER XIII

SOME APPRECIATIONS

A Crowded Life—A High Character and Its Influence —Keeping Politics Clean—Lord Gladstone's Tribute —Mr. Augustine Birrell's Tribute—Mr. J. L. Garvin's Tribute—Sir J. M. Barrie's Tribute.

ROBERT was married on April 4, 1923; he came into Hill Hall on November 5, 1925; he died on November 25, 1927. These dates tell their own tale of blighted hope and tragic bereavement, but the story that has been told is that of a happy, active and useful life, lived at the heart of great affairs, with one great opportunity of public service, and full at all times of honourable and disinterested effort for causes in which his strongest convictions were engaged. In his dual capacity of Secretary of the National Liberal Federation and Secretary of the Liberal Central Association, Robert at the time of his death had had a longer continuous association with the intimate affairs of a great political party than any man then living. His service stretched back to the days when Mr. Gladstone was in the plenitude of his power, and Mr. Chamberlain the enthusiastic leader of the Radical left-wing; he was appointed to the

highest place in the administration of the Liberal party when Mr. Gladstone was still on the scene, and remained at his post for thirty-three years in intimate relations with three Prime Ministers and a succession of leaders and Whips, by all of whom he was trusted and respected. Though he died in the prime of life, the years in which he lived were crowded with events of overwhelming importance, and he had an inner vision of them and of the chief actors in them vouchsafed to very few men of his generation. Robert was far too modest ever to make any large claim for his own part in public affairs, but what he contributed throughout his life by skill, tact and management and cool judgment of men and affairs, is known to all those who have been behind the scenes in these years and may be inferred by others from his acknowledged success in his Red Cross work. That made his qualities known to the public, but they were already known to his political friends.

Best of all was the silent influence of his own high character. It is commonly supposed that if the curtain is lifted on the inner workings of a political party, a corner of Satan's invisible world will be revealed. George III said that " this trade of politics is a rascally business—a trade for a scoundrel and not for a gentleman," and he who had so many gentlemen in his pocket ought to have known. Yet some comfort may, I think, be drawn from the fact that a hundred

years later the principal party manager of this time is found to be a man of deep religious convictions and sensitive honour, to whom meanness, corruption and intrigue were an abomination. So far as Robert was concerned, the life behind the scenes was one of cheerful and loyal comradeship between men who honestly believed in the policy and principles of their party, and were convinced that in serving it they were serving their country. Their reward was quite modest, and they were content to do a vast deal of work for which others obtained the credit. For years together, Robert's brother-in-law, Charles Geake, working under Robert in the Liberal Publication Department, supplied both leaders and rank and file with a wealth of material for their work in Parliament and the country, bringing to his task a singularly acute brain and a memory so exact that he was scarcely ever, if ever, convicted of a mistake. He positively revelled in the work and hugged his obscurity, though now and again he might be heard to sigh when one of his pupils fumbled his good things. I own I can never think of Geake's long, silent, inestimable services without feeling a certain impatience at the inequality of the rewards in the political life. But Robert also was of the same disposition. Though courting publicity for all his clients, and laying himself out to squeeze the utmost of it from the men in the country for quite inferior performers, he hated it himself, and even at times earned the reputation of

aloofness and inaccessibility in his determined efforts to keep interviewers at bay. This was not a pose, for he never for a moment gave himself the airs of a mystery man or thought of himself in any self-important way; it was just natural modesty keeping within its own boundary.

His relations with his colleagues and successive chiefs are among the happiest memories of a fast vanishing scene. The older men, Spence Watson, Arthur Acland, John Brunner, Augustine Birrell, gave him affection and trust; the younger, like Tom Ellis, Donald Maclean, Charles Gatty, Vivian Phillipps, and Charles Russell, counted him among their dearest friends. With his pleasant sense of humour and lively interest in books, music and all human things, he resembled nothing so little as the typical machine-man of politics. He wandered in all the camps, made friends in all parties, collected books with a bookman's flair, was at home with the clergy, acted as Treasurer of a great hospital, and loved to forgather with literary folk and bring them into the company of the political lions. His life was largely in bursts; he gave himself tremendous spells of work in order to earn the leisure that he prized, and which he spent in his seaside home or in journeys abroad. He would probably have prolonged his days if he had lived more evenly, but the discursiveness and the all-round interests which he gained in this way gave him points of contact with a great many different circles

and helped him greatly to become a skilful manager of men and women.

There is one note in common to all the tributes paid to him by old friends. They dwell on the charm of his personality and character. It was the charm of a sincere, loyal and friendly nature expressing itself in a simple and modest way. Robert had strong likes and dislikes, but he kept his dislikes under control, and let his likes flow over into the warm friendships with chosen and kindred spirits, which were so large a part of his life. For the mean and self-seeking he had a quiet scorn which, always within the bounds of politeness, had a penetrating quality that caused wholesome discomfort in its victims. I look back upon that part of his work which I knew best and count him as one of the strongest influences that helped to keep politics clean and sweet in his time.

This memoir may fittingly be concluded by tributes paid to him by four intimate friends ; Lord Gladstone who perhaps saw more of his political work than any other man of his time, Mr. Augustine Birrell one of his many " Chiefs " in the National Liberal Federation, Mr. J. L. Garvin a friend of later years, and Sir J. M. Barrie for whom he had always a warm affection and admiration. Lord Gladstone passed from the scene while this book was in the press, and his tribute to his old friend is the last word that he wrote for the public eye.

SIR ROBERT HUDSON

I By Viscount Gladstone.

Though I had acquaintance with Robert Hudson since his appointment as Assistant Secretary of the N.L.F. under Schnadhorst in 1886, close friendship with him did not come till 1899, when I became Chief Liberal Whip. In 1893 Hudson had succeeded Schnadhorst as secretary to the Federation.

Full knowledge of his mind and qualities did not come easily. Quietude was one of his characteristics. In public life he never sought advertisement and in private life his unassuming nature never had recourse to display. Always an excellent colleague I do not think the full confidence essential to intimacy could be won from him until he was conscious of a touch of mutual agreement on the deeper things in life.

Excepting his famous Red Cross achievements in the War period, the work of the N.L.F. occupied the whole of Hudson's public life, and a word on Chamberlain's famous creation is necessary.

Organization is usually looked upon as an affair of drudgery which rubs off points of interest in the personalities engaged in it. But that is the fault of the personalities because any really capable man can make any work he takes up interesting to himself and others. The N.L.F. was a big human machine concerned with a mass of political and social subjects vital to the nation. Even adequate control required trained experience in politics and ethics, and capacity to

discern character. The N.L.F. was the basic organization of the party, designed to stimulate progressive thought and organize its practical expression. In those days when there was no organized Labour party it included—excepting the Fabian Socialists—all the most progressive and combative politicians in the country. Education and propagandist, its purpose was to make Liberalism a strong motive force in every constituency.

Hudson being a convinced and consistent Liberal was ardently attached to Liberalism. From his youth upwards he had been in contact with the then fiery zeal of Birmingham. As a young man he had learnt there, the home of the N.L.F., the meaning and possibilities of political organization. In 1886 headquarters were removed to London, an event which had an important bearing on his life.

Removal was largely due to the rift in the party on Home Rule. Up to 1886 the Federation had been looked upon as the caucus of Radicalism personally directed by Chamberlain in his Birmingham stronghold. "We are seven," he wrote triumphantly after the election of 1885. But in the following year the Federation under the presidency of James Kitson adopted Home Rule and parted company with Chamberlain. The move to London was necessary for the concentration of Liberal forces.

The Liberal Central Association was housed at 41, Parliament Street. Schnadhorst and Hudson estab-

lished their office at No. 42, the two houses while keeping separate numbers, being turned into one.

Chamberlain had made independence of Liberal officialism a main principle in the constitution of the N.L.F. and independence was not impaired by the conjunction of offices. It strengthened co-operation. A further change was made.

Soon after 1886, Schnadhorst, the Secretary of the Association, was given by Arnold Morley, then Chief Liberal Whip, the post of Secretary to the Liberal Central Association, and on his resignation in 1893 Hudson succeeded to the dual duties. It was the sort of arrangement dear to the English mind. The new post was entirely personal. It was unknown in the constitution of the N.L.F.

The Chief Whip in those days functioned somewhat mysteriously as Chairman of the L.C.A. He was in fact, by virtue of his appointment by the leader of the party and also because he was keeper of the party purse, the responsible organizer of the party. Like Schnadhorst before him, Hudson became liaison officer between the Federation operating in the country at large, and the Chief Whip whose principal functions lay in House of Commons duties, in conference with the leader of the party, in providing candidates, and in collecting funds.

This arrangement widened Hudson's sphere of action and influence. It imposed on him personally, in conjunction with the Chief Whip the duty of co-

ordinating, as far as was practicable the work of the party in Parliament and in the country. In public he was looked upon as the official secretary of the N.L.F. independent of Liberal H.Q. By virtue of this less known office he was in close association with officialism. It was an excellent arrangement, but it was the personal qualities of Schnadhorst and Hudson which alone made it successful.

Hudson was now in touch with London society, and found friendships with men of all parties. He had passed from the routine of a provincial office to a high position in the counsels of the party. Given the right men for working it, no better scheme could have been devised for keeping the party organization alive and efficient and officialism in close contact with the desires of the people and movements of opinion in the country.

It was not always easy to keep the peace. Opinion in the country sometimes took the bit in its teeth and forced the Federation to take a position very awkward to party leaders in the House of Commons. I will give just one example. Campbell-Bannerman's policy on the Boer War (1899-1902) diverged acutely from that of Lord Rosebery and the Liberal Imperialists. Had this honest difference been allowed to split the Liberal party, the result would have been disastrous. It was the special duty of the Chief Whip to keep the party together. It was difficult in the House of Commons. It was still more difficult in the country, where C.B.'s

supporters pressed for action with an inconvenient absence of regard to the powerful Liberal section in the House of Commons, who took other views. Opinion ran so high that the N.L.F. found it impossible to ask any one of the principal leaders to give the annual address. Hudson came to me and said I must take it on.

We were in full agreement with C.B.'s South African policy. If the party could be saved from the fatal split while the war lasted, peace and home affairs would restore unity. So from 1899—1902 we worked together as official smoothers. We got through our troubles and passed in 1903 to the happy hunting fields of the fiscal question.

The duties of the N.L.F. secretaryship made Hudson's post one of primary importance. Presidents of the strength and influence of men like James Kitson and Spence Watson undoubtedly wielded great authority. But the Secretary was the man on the spot who was in constant touch with the leading Liberals in every part of the country. It was on his judgment and reports that the President and the Executive had to rely. The propelling enthusiasms from the party at large had to be adjusted, at any rate in some measure, to the capacities of the legislative factory at Westminster. In 1892 the Federation by insisting on the Newcastle Programme had outrun the constable and brought weakness, not strength, to the Liberal Government. It was a delicate matter

to check the overloading of the official ship without damping down the enthusiasm and energy of the workers on whom the party relied. For this work Hudson was admirably qualified. Clear-sighted, patient, courteous, methodical, exact, he never allowed himself to be rushed to an opinion or decision. Cool and circumspect, he never lost sight of the case on the other side. Without any attempt at masterfulness and dictation he won his way with individuals. He never got to an impasse. If there was obduracy he would say, "Well, let us think it over," or "Have a talk with so-and-so and we can meet again."

Schnadhorst was a very great organizer, but in insight and in bringing difficult people to reasonableness, Hudson, I think, was his superior.

For seven years we worked in concert. In 1895 only 175 Liberals were returned to the House of Commons. Under new leaders and with the democratic flood rising we had to recondition the party. The party chest was almost empty. In the Khaki Election of 1900 we just managed to hold our own. The Unionists came back 402 strong.

In January 1906 the result was:

Liberal and Labour	429
Irish Nationalists	83
Unionists	158

The Unionists had lost 264 seats, and the majority against them was 354. The chief Liberal protagonists, C.B. and Asquith, by character, ability and power to

lead, had made this result possible. Organization, apart from important routine, was specially concerned with education, Free Trade, finance, and with the successful working out of an understanding with the Labour party. To this last was due the abnormality of the Liberal triumph. Our seven years had not been spent in vain.

Hudson's personal development was never checked by office labours. His duties brought him into association with the brightest and the best spirits of Liberalism, men like Dalhousie, George Russell, C. P. Scott, Birrell, Thomas Ellis and many others. It was a moral and intellectual gain to be associated with men of the calibre of Dr. Dale and Frank Wright of Birmingham, James Kitson, Spence Watson, Bryce, Morley and other leading figures in Parliament.

Moreover, office hours were not exacting. The Secretary had free evenings. There was little business during Parliamentary recesses, excepting times of political activity in the autumn. So Hudson found time for friendships quite apart from politics, and for the social and literary tastes so congenial to him. To many who knew him only as politician it came as a surprise to learn that there was another side to his life of which they were almost wholly ignorant.

In 1921 Asquith asked me to lend a hand at 21, Abingdon Street, and I was once more officially associated with Hudson till the election of 1924.

It would be out of place to go into any details of

the party situation. We started with the twenty-five Wee Frees in the House of Commons. The Chief Whipship was in commission. Lloyd George had his own organization. With Asquith as our leader we were a council of four organizers, Donald Maclean, Geoffrey Howard, Robert Hudson and myself. For over three years we worked together as one man. In theory impossible, in practice the arrangement worked perfectly. So long as our funds lasted the results were strikingly good. In 1922 we won some 40 seats, and in 1923 by winning a hundred we reconstituted the Liberal party as a strong force in the House of Commons, 160 strong. In consultation on the value of the political questions of the day, in relation to movements of opinion and the ever present consideration of electioneering possibilities, Hudson's views were indispensable. In the selection of candidates—it fell to me to be responsible in this respect in five general elections—his judgment never erred. In the obnoxious task of collecting party funds I found that Hudson, who had to finance the N.L.F., had the best information about every man who might possibly contribute.

For the unhappy circumstances under which the election of 1924 was fought, we were not responsible. We could not make candidates without straw, and straw was denied us. The country saw plainly that we were not strong enough to furnish an alternative Government and the ground regained by great effort

was lost. On behalf of my colleagues I had informed Asquith, as early as July, that we could not take responsibility for the coming election.

Before the Coalition Government fell, Hudson had been pressed to join Lloyd George in his endeavour to form a new centre organization, but he remained throughout a staunch supporter of the Liberal party. His co-operation and counsel through these very trying years were invaluable. The N.L.F. lost influence during the war and the Coalition dissension which followed. It was necessary to bring its constitution up to date. Hudson and I hammered it out. He won the support of his Executive to the new draft, and in a masterly speech at the annual meeting at Buxton in 1924 he secured unanimous approval. It was the crowning success of his long and honourable connexion with the Federation.

In these years of exasperating difficulty, a long standing friendship ripened into an affection which ever grew stronger. Intimacy brought a fuller and truer knowledge of Hudson's outlook on life, the depth of his religious convictions, his unswerving purpose in what he thought right, his readiness to appreciate the views and interests of others, his wide culture and, accompanying a certain gravity of demeanour, the natural charm and gaiety of his personality. All his fine qualities gained flow and strength from his most happy marriage in 1923.

Looking back over the forty years of our associa-

tion I can say with a full heart that he was a sagacious counsellor, a delightful companion and the truest of friends.

II By Mr. Augustine Birrell.

In writing the following words I am responding to an invitation I feel I cannot refuse, though I know my attempt must fail; for it is a request to put on paper what I feel about one of my dearest and closest friends—Robert Hudson.

To compress into a paragraph, or even expand into a chapter, the attributes of friendship and affection between two men who worked together for some years in alliance and sympathy; and then when that tie was severed, remained friends to the end in an even more enjoyable partnership of common tastes and memories, is, as Humanity well knows, an impossibility.

My acquaintance with Hudson began shortly after I got into the House of Commons, at a by-election in the summer of 1889, when he had been for (I think) some ten years the right hand man of the late Mr. Schnadhorst, whose unattractive name at one time struck terror in the timid ranks of the Tory party, as the Organizing Secretary of the new National Liberal Federation, or, as it used to be called "Joe's Caucus" —a thing as horrible and essentially un-English as a

Trade Union—Mr. S. (for I will curtail his name) retired in or about 1902 and Hudson reigned in his stead. As I never had the pleasure of seeing Mr. S. in the flesh I must suppose that my acquaintance with Hudson simmered gently for a while, and only ripened into a lasting friendship when in 1903 I became Chairman of the Liberal Publication Department, and as such, formally responsible for that excellent print, *The Liberal Magazine* then conducted with energy, knowledge and scrupulous accuracy by Hudson's brother-in-law, Charles Geake, almost, though not quite, as dear a man as Hudson himself.

It was a common "tag" in the last century to quote from Sir Henry Taylor's "Philip von Artevelde:" "The world knows nothing of its greatest men." But then what is the World? In 1900 all active Liberals in England knew Robert Hudson very well, and as for his brother-in-law, why even the Prime Ministers (known of course throughout the world) were glad enough to avail themselves of Geake's always "verifiable" quotations from their opponents' speeches, and if, as indeed sometimes happened, those quotations were not always capable of verification, it was never Geake's fault.

When in 1900 I abandoned my seat in West Fife, and was beaten in North-East Manchester, and consequently was qualified to become Chairman of the Federation, I saw more and more of Hudson both in town and country.

It was Hudson's character, his "totality," that gave him his hold over men. Though courteous in manner, his methods were curt and even brusque. He never like Burke, "wound himself into a subject," but more like Joseph Chamberlain always began a conversation of importance where so many people leave it off—namely at the real point of difference.

The confidence that Hudson at once inspired in men, even rich men, wary of their pockets, was extraordinary. Rich men would give him thousands when they would not have given Prime Ministers a penny piece, and yet Hudson had nothing to offer them in return save his goodwill, for the Federation possessed neither patronage nor power, and never attempted, or would have been allowed, to interfere with the arrangements of the Whips' room.

I never knew Hudson to have a serious misunderstanding with anyone. His methods left no room for misunderstandings. When the Red Cross took him over, they were indeed well advised.

His social gifts though unobtrusive and not obviously jovial, were persuasive. As a host, when in a large mixed party, he was perfection; the kind of man Carlyle called "acrid quacks"—and such men are to be found even in Liberal political circles—shed a large measure of their "acridity" in his presence.

Beneath the surface Hudson's tastes were bookish, though he did not reveal them in all companies. His

little book (partly his father's) about the paternal home in Henley-on-Arden, was a model of local history and typography. His own library, both in its small beginnings and its more sumptuous ending, was all that the library of a true book-lover should be. His small house in Dean's Yard, Westminster, was a perfect reflex of his character, never crowded, yet always open to his friends.

Wherever he lived he was known, respected by all, and loved by not a few.

In the " Yard " itself, though by no means " clerically-minded " he counted for at least as much as a couple of Minor Canons, and almost more than half a Dean. I ought to add that Hudson was never a Nonconformist, but always a good lay Church of England man. But his mild enthusiasm gave small offence even to me.

In friendship he was steady as a rock. People brought their differences to him to be settled, for he had none of his own.

The strength of his domestic affection and the quiet happiness of his homes need not be mentioned here.

His early death was a deprivation, not likely to be forgotten by those who knew him even slightly—never by those who knew him well.

Augustine Birrell.

III By Mr. J. L. Garvin.

I waited through the late hard weather for a favourable day to write quietly and truly, if it may be, about a friend too late made and too early lost. One must not throw, as we are apt, a shadow of regret across the light that belonged to life, and yet it was perhaps a fallacy to wait for this outward sunshine. It changes nothing; except that a bright day will sometimes remind us of a smile that was long ago and that we might not have remembered. I do not know whether it is the right day or not. Robert Hudson was no ordinary man, nor at any time easy to depict. Our friendship was formed after the war in circumstances bringing men nearer to each other almost at once than years of good acquaintanceship and liking usually allow. It was knitted by affinities, tastes and understandings in a sort that made one wish it had been always. We talked of very different things belonging to years before we met as though we had been through them together; and there was the best thing of all, as well—that when the common consent came of itself you could sit with him in a mood of excellent mutual intelligence and dispense with conversation, save for a humorous word exchanged now and then about the pith of a matter suggested by a book or a recollection. Looking over at him one felt often that a portrait of him by a reserved and masterly painter, firmly distinct, even salient in delineating

feature, but with a general colouring subtle yet not too low in tone, would speak better than verbal account.

It was not that Robert Hudson's personality was one of half-tones or that there was anything elusive in his traits. The contrary was the case. At first glance, as one well recalls, the countenance answered to his repute as a great and tenacious organizer who none the less had an invincible aversion from public display. In his private nature a connoisseur, untouched by the ceaseless driving of wide affairs through more than forty years, he might have been mistaken on a chance social encounter, for a man framed by leisure and perception; or even for a keen recluse. What met the eye was striking, but it suggested much more than met the eye and much that you would not at once begin to find out. Everything about him indicated the quality of character in the grain with the good knots of idiosyncrasy properly belonging to it. Long experience his was in dealing with difficult persons who have to be borne, as with the most stubborn difficulty of situations which have to be managed. This enabled him to suffer fools wisely, though not made by instinct to suffer them gladly. Physically delicate, his spare figure had the natural lines of robust and active physique. His head was notable anywhere; the profile capable, pronounced, and determined in a manner expressing the more deliberate and unswerving rather than the swifter movements of tempera-

ment ; so that it seemed the face of one who could fight uphill battles for a long time (as in truth he had fought them) ; and it was always a courteous face and singularly controlled.

But, with all that control, fervour was deep in the whole nature of Robert Hudson. He might, and he did, try to screen it and cloud it from nearly everybody and on nearly all occasions. But when you knew him you saw that it was always in his eyes and often in his even but marked voice, as of one accustomed, as he had been since early manhood, to give succinct orders in the largest connexions of party-organization and war-organization ; or to give thoughtful and decided advice in other ways as in the deep resolute humanity of his work for Westminster Hospital. From what he had put his hand to he did not draw back. When he had undertaken any duty he shirked no pains that it brought. In that manner which has been called the secret of efficient civilization, as against emotions and ideals without punctual practice, he faced the routine and did it. For all the exact discipline that he took upon himself and created about him, he " put heart into it," as Wandering Willie says. This was not only an inseparable part of him : it was the essence. Until you appreciated it as something one might call perdurable, you could not understand anything he was or did. As we might expect, this underlying inextinguishable fervour, suppressing its signs, work-

ing habitually within all the regular and moderate forms of procedure, was rather concentrated on a few definite purposes and tastes than diffused amidst many. As an organizer, more powerful than his considerate manners might lead the unwary to suppose, he was insistent, resistent and persistent to any extent required ; and though he was equable and persuasive by preference, he could be summary and trenchant at need. To his recreation indoors and out of doors, he brought the same even energy and continuity of mind ; and was intensely selective or particular, to use an old-fashioned word, in all things.

But I must break off for a moment these impressions, forcibly as they return, and say something of the career that fulfilled the character. I will not say displayed the character. It never was known with any approach to adequacy even by his own side in public affairs. Robert Hudson's services to Liberalism were of a length and of a temper seldom equalled in the history of party in this, or any other country by the permanent head of a central organization. With indomitable patience through years of adversity, that sometimes seemed everlasting, he held on up to an epoch of victory beyond dreams. To talk with him as one whose experience had ranged through much of the same field though not in the same camp, during a period that changed out of recognition the former conditions of English politics, was a pleasure often repeated. It always made some addition to en-

lightenment. For Robert Hudson had been for a very long time one of those mysterious beings vaguely known to the readers of political journalism as a "party manager." Few persons have envisaged one; but they are supposed to sit behind the scenes, operating an extensive machinery; receiving intelligence from all the constituencies; dealing with a thousand small affairs concerning members, candidates and others; sometimes conducting momentous negotiations; always nursing finances; constantly influencing the actions and fortunes of politicians much more in the public eye.

The manner was remarkable in which Hudson rose and worked in this sphere. As a boy of eighteen he went on the staff of the National Liberal Federation at the very height of its power in the early eighties of last century. These were years of great visions and he shared the enthusiasms of the younger school. The future very soon, it was thought, would see the long reign of the New Liberalism under Chamberlain and Dilke, the former then being the idol of the Federation. Soon, came the Home Rule convulsion, abruptly altering the whole state of English politics, with consequences continuing to this day. For long the full consequences were by no means apparent. Francis Schnadhorst, himself a force in Radicalism, left Chamberlain and Birmingham to become the head of the Federation in London. And his Assistant Secretary and right hand amidst these tumults was

Robert Hudson then aged twenty-two. Young as he was, he very soon had to bear the real responsibility. Schnadhorst had a legendary repute not easy for this generation to understand. Partly because of his name and devotion to detail he was supposed to be a Prussian genius of preparation, who would prove to be Mr. Gladstone's organizer of victory. There had always been exaggeration in the legend. In any case, his optimism had its part in buoying up Mr. Gladstone, only too ready to be sanguine, but turned out to be quite unfounded. His physical and mental powers were past their best, and within a couple of years showed incurable decline.

The weight of the burthen fell on young Hudson. He carried it with the coolness of an older head and with tireless energy. He had the face of a born organizer; every line of it executive; his instinct was both decisive and conciliatory. He was not yet twenty-five before those on both sides who were intimately acquainted with the inside workings of politics became aware that the real personality behind the Liberal organisation was not Schnadhorst, but Hudson. Little he realized how stern was the task that lay before him through then unguessed years of misfortune and defeat and heart-breaking dissension. Liberalism won its worst of Pyrrhic victories in 1892; it was utterly routed in 1895, and again in 1900. But these twenty years of almost unexampled trial for a "party manager" were

marked by one extraordinary, persistent feature. At no time did the organization or the organizer fail their party. As every curious student of the history of elections knows, the total Liberal poll in the constituencies always remained high and formidable—far closer in the darkest hours to the aggregate Unionist voting than was suggested by the balance of representation in the House of Commons.

To me, Hudson's quiet inflexible fortitude through this epoch of defeats and confusions always seems a part of his record—though I can only speak as one who looked at it from another side of the combat—to which sufficient justice has never been done. It remains as an outstanding example to parties in distress. Distress protracted and accumulated until the depression and discontent surrounding the " managers " saturating the atmosphere, tried to the utmost the firmest soul amongst them. Hudson held on and he was destined to have his full day of glory in these matters. When Chamberlain took up tariff reform and Imperial reciprocity as suddenly in appearance as Gladstone had adopted Home Rule, when the Unionists were convulsed and disarrayed in their turn, the wheel came full circle. Hudson devoted all his influence and skill to bring about that final reunion of the Opposition forces which was rapidly effected. Within less than three years from then, in the stupendous General Election of 1906, the chief organizer of Liberalism had his marked part in

the most sweeping political triumph of its kind known for generations. And long as he had to wait for it, he had begun so early in politics that he was still young.

Perhaps I have dwelt too long in proportion on this, but it is not unimportant ; the impressions of things now little remembered, are strong in my mind ; and we liked to talk together of those bygone days " before the flood," when the cataclysm to come upon the nation and the world was still unguessed.

When the War came there was deeper, greater work to do, and work that enlisted and brought out like nothing before, everything that was in him—his effectual human feeling as well as his masterly administrative mind. Party names were little or nothing now ; the public life aforetime—never in fact public for him—a thin mist, almost an emptiness. Speedily after the outbreak of the struggle, he began to create the Red Cross Fund, and he reared it, as the need went on, to a sum of about £21,000,000. To note that this result far outdistanced all precedent, and left it out of sight so to speak, is to say the least. This was amongst the conspicuous achievements at home equal in credit and value to a battle won at the front. Amidst the devastation it was honour enough for any man's life to have played a part of this magnitude in the cause of succour and healing and solace. It raised, I think permanently, the ideals of humanity in every land. He was not only his fullest and best

self at this time, but lifted above former life like countless persons in lesser ways. I did not see much of Robert's Red Cross work at first hand, having enough to do in a different way. But I remember some glimpses, and especially one. A dull afternoon in late autumn, Hudson's office in half-shadow; his face emerging from it singularly with the salient and delicate lines, and an expression of composed ardour like a veiled glow. The whole movement of the place suggested celerity without fuss; as though everything about him were working well, with sure, even compulsion.

The Ministerial crisis, more fatal for his party than anything before, during the vicissitudes of his connexion with it for a generation, arose in the gloomy weeks of national anxiety and uprising at the end of 1916. He might have been a Minister in the Lloyd George Cabinet, but could not bring himself to abandon Asquith to whom he had been closer for many years. He was of that kind. It was as well that he was made so. Office in these circumstances could have added nothing to him.

But the full promise of life's best compensation seemed then to be his own. After an early sorrow, his private lot had been unshared for many years. A late and great happiness came to him—one of the kind more often read about than known—when he married one of the gifted and rare women of her time. Of that no more can be said, but if one did not

venture to say so much no reference to those last years would have truth or purpose at all. They were everything to him ; and the meaning of life, " finely touched and to fine issues," was revealed in this way as happens to very few. To old friends, in this tranquil circle some new ones were added. Not many. In numerousness of persons and things Robert Hudson did not delight. He knew all the arguments about solitude and multitude, but his nature reacted most strongly against the modern evil of " too much," as Nietzsche somewhere expresses it in different words. As I have said or implied before, he was intensely selective. For him and rightly there was an enormous difference between one book and another ; between one person and another. To his old friends he adhered " without truce," as one of his favourites, Robert Louis Stevenson puts it. He loved Charles Russell and Charles Gatty—one of the best light table-talkers imaginable —who are gone also ; and no man better than Augustine Birrell who survives. In good and familiar company of this kind, he listened more than he engaged, but with a vigilant urbanity ; and contributed a telling irony of his own to the salad of talk.

I remarked that this exceptional organizer never lost himself in that occupation, but was in countenance and spirit what might be thought the contrary—that is, a connoisseur. This trait struck one at the first glance. It appeared in his love of books and printing. His affections in this kind were sifted.

More like Lord Grey in this than like anyone else one can recall at the moment, he did not care to be a ranging and glancing reader, but in the same way he knew his beloved authors as though he had studied their grain under a lens. When the conversation turned upon Dr. Johnson, he had more to give than to hear. He had followed up this theme for years with the characteristic tenacity and unconfessed fervour; and was exact about out-of-the-way details, though relishing as much as anyone the broad humorous stuff of Boswell, and the principal scenes like the first dinner with Wilkes. Robert Louis Stevenson amongst moderns, he preferred, and loved with the same definiteness. Once he was persuaded against his will to reprint an address on Stevenson delivered nearly thirty years ago at Manchester. It was as full of good judgment as though he had been a literary professional; but as well it has another quality not always found in the regular commentators. Clearly he has read and re-read the whole of Stevenson; his opinions are his own; every stroke is distinct. Strict method in the routine of life and exceptional sensitiveness to the spirit of imagination seldom are united in this way.

Out of doors at Hill Hall, he had the same selecting perception. The difference between one tree and another was as much to him as between person and person and book and book. Lady Hudson, of course, was and is a celebrated mistress of gardens. Gardens

creative and inventive of living form and vividness. I like to think that this is an art of composition and light and colour not unworthy of comparison with the art of palette and canvas, though no academy or anthology can perpetuate examples of the beauty of gardens vanishing with the season, and coming again but never the same. Why does one recollect one day, vividly detaching itself from the background of years ? It seemed at the time but an ordinary bright day of high blue and white clouds "in fleets;" when the sunlight played over the long shelves within doors, and we lingered about them discussing good editions and the art and joys of collecting; but afterwards we went out. The blue-bells flowed like a river through the tall open copse and its chase of light and shadow. One day like others except it did not come again. Robert's sureness of his own feeling and mind entered into the peace of these pleasures, and one imagined a mellowing and ripening felicity at Hill Hall for many years. It was not to be. Though all his outward ways were active and punctual, he was not strong; and no care nor prayer about him could avail. I heard of his death when a dim November evening was closing in by the sea; and at a place, as it happened, where, long before, one of the harder struggles that an irretrievable death may leave to the living had been wrestled with more or less as might be. I felt, uselessly but truly, that I would have given some stretch of my own life to lengthen his; and so

feel still. Another thought, perhaps not so useless, came later, that though his last rounded years of private happiness were brief, he, like few men, had heard in his heart "the late lark singing."

J.L.G.

March 23, 1929.

IV By Sir J. M. Barrie.

It was always good to know that Robert Hudson was to be there—wherever it was. Evidently I began to feel this about him from our first meeting, at which I did not even know his name. This was at some sort of club dinner so long ago that I forget everything about it except that he performed duties thereat which took him occasionally from the room, and I felt a blank fall upon us till he came back. I was to discover thereafter that there never was such a man for performing duties, and that whenever there was something difficult to do, the general cry was "let us leave it in Robert's hands." So they were always very full hands and very generous ones. He was as kind as he was astute, and when a great happiness came to his later years we all rejoiced with the much loved man, and knew we could leave her safely in Robert's hands.

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